# Statewide Automated Reconciliation System (SARS) User's Manual

*California EBT Project*

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## Revision History

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| Version 1.1 | 05/13/2002 | Updates |
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| Version 6 | 6/1/2003 | Update Appendix E with new contacts<br>Updated section 4.5 for DFA 885 / FNS 46 Report<br>Add Host-to-Host changes<br>Expanded introduction to section 3, Performing Reconciliation, to provide additional business background and description.<br>Added section 3.1.12 Fraud Draw Down Report |

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# 1.   INTRODUCTION

A critical component for the success of the State's Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) project is for counties to accurately and timely reconcile their eligibility systems to the EBT system on a daily basis. The Health and Human Services Data Center (HHSDC) EBT project team developed a Settlement and Reconciliation Guide to standardize roles and processes for the reconciliation of EBT data. Despite this standardization there are a number of manual processes associated with the regular reconciliation of the county data and the EBT system data. To further standardize the reconciliation processes and improve reporting at the county and state levels a Statewide Automated Reconciliation System (SARS) has been developed. The intent is to provide counties with a tool to enable them to perform their daily reconciliation tasks in a uniform manner throughout the state.

The SARS solution is a browser-based centralized application that allows counties to view various levels of data to reconcile their county's benefit issuance; benefits redeemed, and benefit obligations against the Citibank Electronic Funds Services (CEFS) system. The state also has the capability of viewing statewide totals of the various levels of data as well as view individual county reconciliation data.

## 1.1   BACKGROUND

The SARS application was piloted in Yolo and Alameda counties and is used to reconcile their EBT data, key enter bank data, and perform adjustments when necessary. Additionally, the SARS application is used by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to monitor reconciliation data, key-enter FNS data, and administer the system. Counties may administer the system locally. The overall purpose of the SARS system is to compare the actual county issuance and settlement data with the benefit draw and account activity data reported by the CEFS EBT system.

## 1.2   PURPOSE

The purpose of the SARS User's Manual is to provide both county and state users with a guide and a reference to properly understand the navigation and usage of SARS.  It assists in the processes required to perform EBT reconciliation, properly enter data, view detailed CEFS daily reports, and administer the system.

## 1.3   DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The SARS User Manual is divided into the following five sections:

1. <u>Introduction</u>: This section.

2. <u>Getting Started</u>: Provides the user with an overview of the application design and covers how a user can successfully gain access and navigate within the application.

3. <u>Performing Reconciliation</u>: This section provides detail information regarding the process and steps that a user will go through to perform daily reconciliation.

4. <u>Entering Data</u>: To complete reconciliation for any given day requires that each county and the state enter funding information into SARS to balance between what SARS expects and what actually occurred. This section details the screens and manner in which to enter this data.

5. <u>Non-Reconciliation Reports</u>: Details the EBT reports and files that will be viewable through the SARS system.

6. <u>Administering the System</u>: This section contains information on the functions and processes within SARS that are used to administer the system. Not all users have administrative privileges and therefore this section may not be applicable to all readers.

Each section provides a step-by-step process for accomplish the various tasks. The steps required to perform each function are called out to provide a quick reference tool while using the SARS application.

## 2.    GETTING STARTED

This section provides users with an overview of the SARS application design. It also details how a user can successfully gain access to SARS and navigate within the application.

### 2.1   OVERVIEW

SARS is a browser-based application that allows counties to view various levels of data to reconcile their benefits issued, benefits redeemed, and benefit obligations. Authorized state users will also have the capability of viewing statewide totals of the various levels of data as well as view individual county reconciliation data.
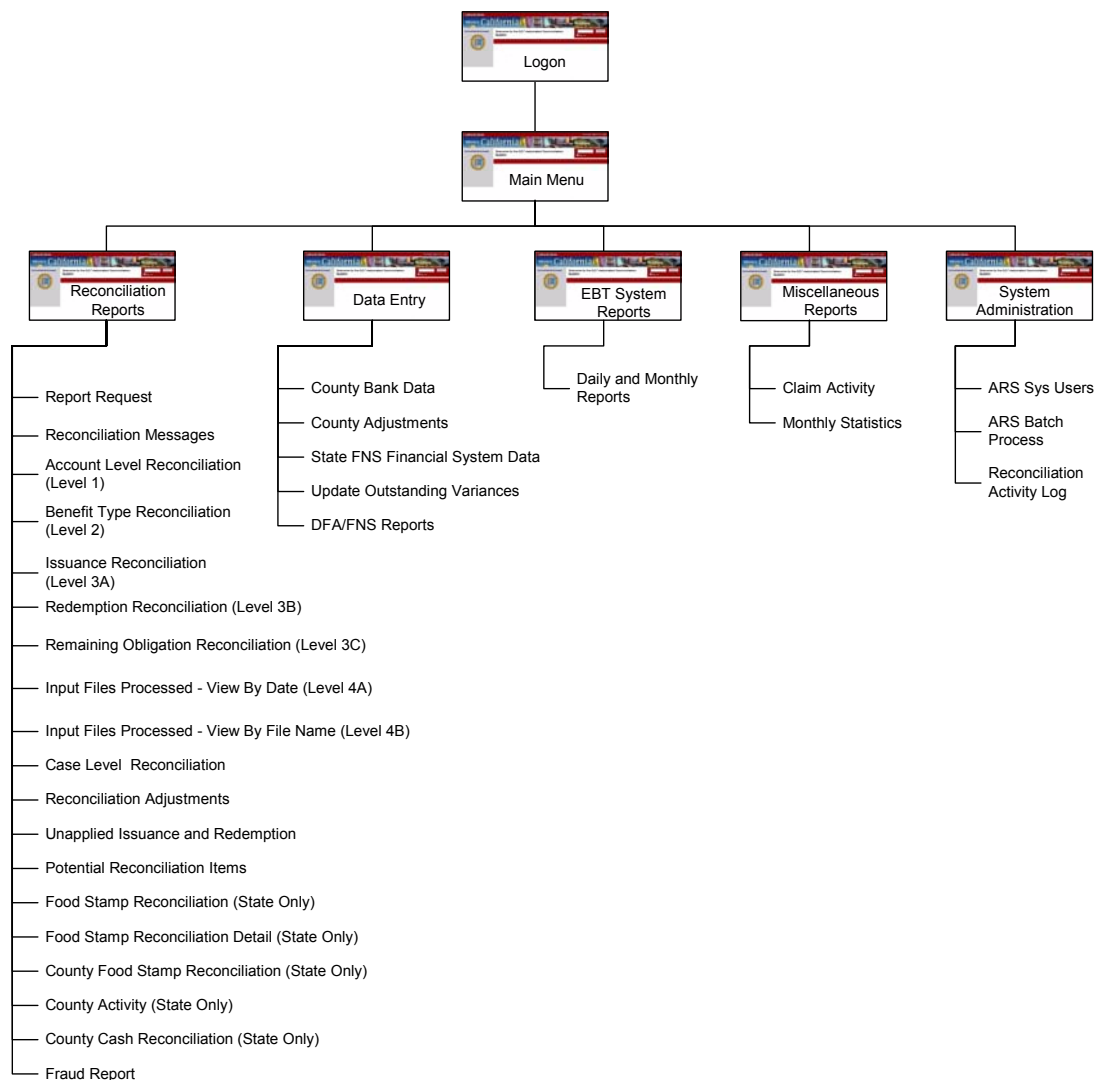


**Figure 1: SARS Application Organization**

Access to SARS is provided via the HHSDC Internet web site http://www.sars.ebtproject.ca.gov/. Upon entry to the SARS site, the user is

requested to login with a valid User ID and Password. Successful login will bring the user to the SARS Main Menu where they can select the specific area or function they want to navigate to. Figure 1 on the previous page illustrates the hierarchical organization of the SARS application.

Although each SARS data window is accessible from at least one menu, each window includes dropdown menus that provide direct links to various other screens, allowing experienced users to route themselves directly to the areas they wish to view. The next section provides detailed step-by-step instructions for logging onto SARS.

## 2.2 LOGIN

As mentioned earlier, you may enter the SARS site directly via the Internet address http://www.sars.ebtproject.ca.gov/. You may also enter the SARS application indirectly via a link on the EBT Project website http://www.ebtproject.ca.gov/. If using this alternative method, upon entry you must click on the **Links of Interest** link on the left menu and then click the **Statewide Automated Reconciliation System** link.

Once you have successfully accessed SARS, the SARS login screen will be displayed as illustrated in Figure 2. To be permitted access to the SARS, you must enter a valid User ID and Password combination. County user Ids and passwords are administered at the county level so if you are a county user and need access, you will need to know who your county administrator is (Refer to Appendix E).



**Figure 2: SARS Logon Screen**

➢ **Enter** your **User ID**

➢ **Enter** your **Password**

➢ **Click** the Login button

If you enter an incorrect User ID or Password an error message will appear in **red** on the screen notifying you that your User ID and Password combination was not

recognized (refer to Figure 3). You should attempt to re-enter this information, verifying that you entered the value correctly (SARS user ids and password are not case sensitive). If you are sure you have entered all information correctly and still cannot gain access to the SARS application, contact your System Administrator. System Administrator contact information can be found in Appendix E.



**Figure 3: SARS Login Error Message**

Once you have successfully logged onto SARS, the first screen that you will see is the SARS main menu, illustrated in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: SARS Main Menu**

This screen is the starting point for all SARS functions. If your task is to perform reconciliation or check reconciliation data, you should click on the **Reconciliation Reports** link. If your task is to enter data, e.g., county bank data or adjustments, you should click on the **Data Entry Screens** link. If you want to view the CEFS daily or monthly reports click on the **EBT System Reports** link. If you wish to view the Claim

Activity data or Monthly Statistics information, click on the **Miscellaneous Reports** link.  Finally, if you are a system administrator and need to change access rights within SARS, you should click on the **System Administration** link. Because each of these links will be used by specific groups of users for specific functions, each function is described in detail in its own section in this document. You may skip to a particular section at any time.

The first time you enter the SARS system you should change your password by clicking on the **Change Password** link. Figure 5 shows the change password window.

Your user id is displayed but cannot be modified.  To change your password you must type in your current password (Old Password) and your new password 2 times (New Password and Confirm New Password).



**Figure 5: Change Password Screen**

> ➢ **Enter** your **Old Password** (current password)
> ➢ **Enter** your **New Password** (new password)
> ➢ **Enter** your **Confirm New Password** (new password)
> ➢ **Click** the  Save  button

If you type the password in wrong, one of the following two error messages will be displayed in red:

> ➢ Old password is not valid for this user
> ➢ New password does not match the confirmed new password

If you are successful at changing your password, you will be taken back to the main menu.

You should change your password on a periodic basis.  It may be best to

synchronize this change with another system. By making this password the same, you only need to remember one password between the two systems.  SARS has no restrictions on its password field other than it cannot exceed 15 characters. There is no time limit forcing you to change it.

## 2.3   SARS NAVIGATION

SARS provides three methods of navigating within the system:

> ➢   Menus: Windows that provide a list of items to select.

> ➢   Navigation Tool Bar: Used to identify the specifics of what a user wishes to do within a window or where to go on leaving a window.

> ➢   Hotlinks: Links on pages that allow the user to quickly jump to a specific screen

### 2.3.1   Menus

When you first log-on to SARS, you are presented with the first menu in the system, referred to as the Main Menu (refer to Figure 4).  Any selection from this menu, with the exception of change password, will display a subsequent menu.  Each of these Sub-menus provides you access to the functions specific to that work activity.  For example, Selection of the Reconciliation Reports option will take you to the Reconciliation Reports Sub-menu from which you can choose any of the reconciliation reports to view.  Selection of the System Administration option will take you to the System Administration Sub-menu where you can select the specific administrative function to perform.  Each Sub-Menu provides the ability to return to the main menu.

Each of the menus within SARS has the same look and feel.  Further discussion on menus is left for the sections of this manual that the menu's activity pertains to.

### 2.3.2   Navigation Tool Bar

SARS has been designed to use a navigation tool bar to provide the same "look and feel" for all Reconciliation Reports, Data Entry Screens, and System Administration functions. This navigation tool bar is located in the upper portion of each screen, just below the California Welcome graphics, and is illustrated below.



**Figure 6: Reconciliation Reports Navigation Bar**

It was considered important that the system be easy to navigate to facilitate quick access to the data required. In certain instances, SARS provides additional user help text in the use of the navigation tool bar. This occurs when the steps to take are not immediately obvious. An example of the help text provided is illustrated in Figure 7 on the next page.

**Figure 7: Navigation Tool Bar**

The upper portion of the navigation bar includes the **Main Menu** and the **Sub Menu** drop down boxes that allow you to navigate to a different screen. The **Main Menu** drop down box includes the menu items found on the SARS Main Menu (refer to Figure 4).



**Figure 8: Main Menu Drop Down Box Contents**

This allows you to jump from one SARS function to another function's menu. For example, if you are in the Reconciliation Reports you can jump to the Data Entry Screens menu or the CEFS Reports menu without having to first navigate to the main menu. However, if you wish to go directly to the Main Menu, just click on the **Main Menu** link provided.

The Sub Menu lists every menu item for the function you are currently in. In the example provided in Figure 8, you are currently in the Reconciliation Reports function, as identified by the currently selected Main Menu item. The Sub Menu therefore lists all Reconciliation Reports sub menu items, i.e., the items listed on the Reconciliation Reports menu (refer to Figure 9 on the next page). This allows you to switch between Reconciliation Reports items without having to return to the Reconciliation Reports menu. However, if you do want to return to the original sub menu, simply click on the **Sub Menu** link provided. The Sub Menu drop down box contents always change based on the function in which you are working.
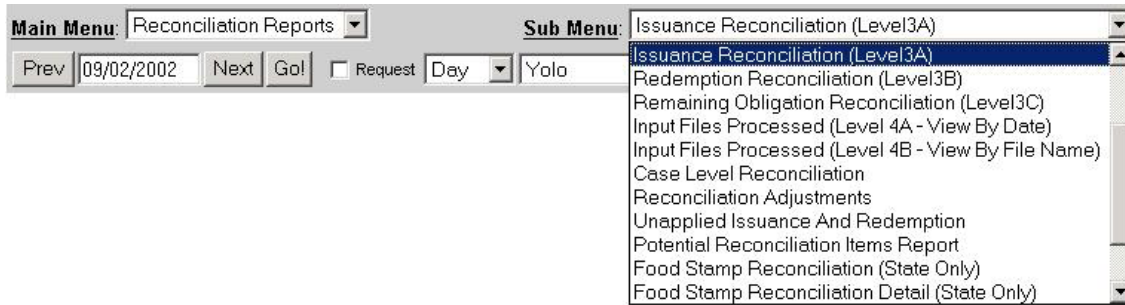
**Figure 9: Reconciliation Reports Sub Menu**

If you do not have access to particular function of the tool bar, either due to your security rights or due to its applicability to the screen you are on, SARS will disable that portion of the tool bar and set it to a specific value. The look and feel of the tool bar remains the same so as to keep consistency between windows and across functions. For example, Figure 10 illustrates a Yolo county user that is limited to Yolo county data. Additionally, the Benefit Type setting has no applicability to this screen so is also disabled, as indicated by the "graying-out" of the selection field.



**Figure 10: Navigation Bar Access**

The lower level of the navigation bar includes several buttons and drop down boxes to control what you want to do within this window. The first is a date field that allows you to specify which day that information should be displayed for. The Reconciliation Reports and the Data Entry Screens automatically set this value to the date prior to the day in which you are working (because reconciliation is always performed for the day before). You then have the option of either changing this date by typing over the date displayed, or by clicking the PREV or NEXT buttons, both of which either subtract or add one day to the date displayed (one month if the display is based on months and not days).

Users can specify if they want to display information by day or by month using the first dropdown box provided on the toolbar, as illustrate in Figure 11.



**Figure 11: View By Day/Month Drop Down Box**

Day is always the default. If the user switches to Month, the month is displayed in the date field instead of the full date, as illustrated in Figure 12.



**Figure 12: View by Month**

> **Note:** Once you have completed setting the navigation bar to the values you want, you must click the Go! button to execute the request. For example, if you want to view the data by Month instead of Day you use the drop down box to choose Month. The data you are viewing will not switch to the Month until you execute the request by clicking the Go! button.

Once you have chosen to view the date by Month or Day, and clicked Go! seven days of data or seven months of data will be displayed on most Reconciliation Reports. You may use the Prev button and the Next button to scroll through the days or months. The following is a summary of the buttons included on the navigation bar.

> ➢ The Prev button subtracts one day (or one month when viewing by month) from the date currently displayed.

> ➢ The Next button adds one day (or one month when viewing by month) to the date currently displayed.

> ➢ The Go! button tells the system that you want it to produce the report based on the information you have set on the navigation toolbar.

Items that are selectable on the navigation bar are, for the most part, governed by the screen being displayed and the applicability of the data to the user. There are some Reconciliation Reports that may display data based on Account Type and/or Benefit Type. As an example, the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) report only shows data by Account Type, in which case when displaying this window, the Benefit Type portion of the navigation bar is disabled. However, the Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) report shows data based on Account Type and Benefit Type, in which case, both are changeable.

**Figure 13: Account Type drop down contents**

There are only two kinds of Account Types, Food Stamps and Cash. Figure 13 illustrates the Account Type dropdown, showing how these selections are displayed.

If you choose Food Stamps as an Account Type, then the Benefit Type that will be displayed in the Benefit Type drop down box will be FSP (Food Stamp Program), and DFSP (Disaster Food Stamp Program), as illustrated in Figure 14.



**Figure 14: Benefit Type Drop Down Contents for Food Stamps**

Conversely if you choose the Cash Account Type, the 25 Benefit Types that apply to the Cash Account Type will be displayed in the drop down box as shown in Figure 15 (refer to Appendix C for a description of all the available Benefit Types).



**Figure 15: Benefit Type Drop Down Contents for Cash**

Another feature included on the navigation bar is the Report **Request** checkbox.



**Figure 16: Report Request Checkbox**

There are some reports that perform numerous calculations and may require time to open, especially for large counties where large amounts of data must be processed. You can mark the Request checkbox for various reports and they will be processed in the background, creating a snapshot of the report, viewable the moment they become available. To perform the Report Request you must check the **Request** box on the navigation bar, after you have chosen a report to view and set all other report parameters on the navigation toolbar. Figure 16 on the previous page shows an example where the user is going to run the Report Request for the Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) report.

> ➢ **Enter / Select** the required report parameters
> ➢ **Check** ☑ the **Request** checkbox
> ➢ **Click** the Go! button

Once you press Go! you will be taken to the Report Screen shown in Figure 17.



**Figure 17: Report Request Screen - Waiting**

The Report Request screen will list the report that you requested SARS to build in the background, and once available, it will be replaced by a link (see Figure 18 on the next page).

**Figure 18: Report Request Screen - Complete**

The link to the report consists of the reports name, allowing you to view the results simply by clicking on this link. Figure 18 shows the Level 2 Report link that was requested in Figure 16. The Food Stamps version of this report is still being built in the background, while the Cash version is already built and available for viewing. When you click on the link, the report will be displayed exactly as if you had requested it interactively.  Visually, there is no difference.

You may delete any report by clicking the **Delete** link and it will be removed from the system. After approximately 30 days the reports will automatically be purged.

The Reports Request screen is accessible from the Reconciliation Reports Menu, or the Sub Menu of the navigation bar if you are currently viewing another reconciliation report.

> **Note:** These reports are snapshots of the SARS data at the point in time they are run.  Therefore, if there are any changes to the data, e.g., a special batch run, entry of an adjustment, entry of bank data, or the running of Update Outstanding Variances, you must run the Report Request process again to get an updated snapshot.  You should also delete the previous snapshot to prevent future confusion.

### 2.3.3  Hotlinks

There are three types of non-menu links[1] provided by SARS, as follows:

> ➢ Non-SARS Web links: Links that take you to non-SARS web sites.
>
> ➢ Common SARS links: Links that are found on most if not all SARS windows providing quick access to common functions.

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[1] A menu link is simply the menu item that when clicked on, takes you to the selected window.

> ➢ SARS Reconciliation Quick links: Links unique to specific reconciliation screens that allow you to quickly access the window to provide a more detailed breakdown of the data currently displayed.

Non-SARS Web Links

Non-SARS Web links are links that take you to non-SARS web sites. SARS currently has two, one for the State of California Home Page and one for the EBT Project Home Page, as illustrated in Figure 19.



**Figure 19: Non-SARS Web Links**

Selecting either of these links will take you out of the SARS system and display the main page of that external system.

Common SARS links

Common SARS links are those links that are function independent and found on most if not all SARS windows. Figure 20 illustrates the location of these links.



**Figure 20: Common SARS Links**

SARS currently has three general links and two navigation links.  The three general links are as follows:

> ➢ **User Manual**: Displays the SARS user manual (this document) in PDF format.  You can also download the SARS manual from this same link by right clicking on the link and then selecting the "Save Target As" option.  You will then be prompted to specify the folder to place the document.  The SARS manual is over 15 Megabytes so if you have a slow connection, such as that provided via a dial-up connection, the display of this file will take a long time and may give you the appearance that your system is locked up while it transfers the file to you. Under these circumstances, it is suggested that you download the file so that you can monitor the transfer progress.  Then after the file transfer is complete, you can view the file locally, from your workstation.

> ➢ **Logout**: This link logs you out of SARS and returns you to the logon screen.

> ➢ **Back to Top of Page**: This link simply moves your browser's scroll bar so that the top of the SARS window is displayed.  It is only applicable when the screen being displayed exceeds the length of the browser window.  Since the browser window size is completely under the control of the workstation and user, the application never knows how big the user's browser setting is and therefore provides this link on all pages.

The two navigation links provided by SARS are both on the Navigation bar, as illustrated in Figure 21.



**Figure 21: Navigation Links**

The Main Menu link takes you back to the Main Menu screen.  You may also simply go to any of the Main Menu functions by using the drop down provided (refer to section 2.3.2, Navigation Tool Bar).  This becomes more of an individual preference issue.

The Sub Menu link takes you to the menu for the function you are currently performing. You always know the function you are performing because it is displayed in the Main Menu dropdown just to the left of this link.  Like the Main Menu option, you may also simply go to any of the Sub Menu function by using the drop down provided.

<u>SARS Reconciliation Quick links</u>

Section 3 of this document details the manner in which to perform reconciliation. To assist in navigating amongst some of the related screens within SARS, some "Quick" Navigation links have been provided.  These Quick Navigation links allow you to drill down in the level of detail you are viewing. This feature is discussed here because it describes another navigation option within SARS.

The first Reconciliation Report that you will view when performing reconciliation is the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) shown in Figure 22.



**Figure 22: Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report**

By clicking on the **Food Stamps** link in Figure 22 you will be taken to the Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) screen shown in Figure 23, with the Account Type dropdown box pre-filled with the "Food Stamps" selection.



**Figure 23: Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) – Pre-Population**

You can then populate this report by verifying the parameter settings and clicking on the Go! button. Figure 24 illustrates what this window might look like.



**Figure 24: Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) - Populated**

The window illustrated in Figure 24 provides additional links to further drill down in the financial detail.  By clicking on the **FSP** link in Figure 24 you will be taken to the Issuance Reconciliation Level 3A report with the Account type set to "Food Stamps" and the Benefit Type set to "FSP", as illustrated in Figure 25.

> ➢ **Click** on the **Food Stamps** or the **Cash** link to drill down to the Level 3A Benefit Type detail



**Figure 25: Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) – Pre-Populated**

The Level 3A, 3B, and 3C screens are all the next level of detail under the Level 2. The 3A details out the Issuance information for a specific benefit type, the 3B details out the redemption information and the Level 3C details out the obligations information.  Because obligation detail is simply the separation of issuance versus redemptions, the level 3C is effectively a repeat of the Level 2, only specific to the benefit type identified.  The link provided on the Level 2 only takes you to the level 3A since issuance information is what the county must verify on a daily basis. Redemption information is only informational.

You can then populate this report by verifying the parameter settings and clicking on the Go! button. Figure 26 on the next page illustrates what this window might look like.

This quick navigation feature is limited to the Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3A reports. To navigate to additional reconciliation reports you must use the **Sub Menu** drop down box or navigate to the Reconciliation Reports Menu screen and simply choose the report that you want to view.

Now that you know how to navigate through the SARS application you are ready to perform reconciliation.

**Figure 26: Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A)**

# 3. PERFORMING RECONCILIATION

EBT reconciliation is a daily requirement for both state and county users. The purpose of EBT reconciliation is to ensure that the benefits issued, benefits redeemed, and benefit obligations reconcile between what the county authorized, what was posted in the EBT system and what funds were requested and withdrawn.

This section is to be used by all SARS users that will perform EBT reconciliation activities. It includes a description of the steps required to perform reconciliation. It is recommended that you review Appendix B, Reconciliation Reports Data Sources, after this section, as it will provide you with a good background of how the key Reconciliation Reports derive their data. This section details both the county reconciliation reports and the state only reconciliation reports.

The SARS system has been designed to assist you in the reconciliation process and to make reconciliation as simple and streamlined as possible. Consequently, the reconciliation process begins at a very high-level and permits you to drill down to more detail. For example, the data is presented first at the Food Stamp and Cash level (if your county participates in the Cash program) and if no variance exists there is no need to drill down further. However, if a variance does exist, you may drill down into more detailed breakdowns of the data, such as benefit type or case level detail to determine where the variance exists. There are some Reconciliation Reports that will be used by the state only. These state only reports are described in detail in section 3.2.

The most important concept to understand when performing reconciliation is that reconciliation is always done in the past. For example, today, you would be reconciling yesterday's activity. Today's activity would not be reviewed until tomorrow. The reason for this is that you need to have a fixed period of activity to allow you to analyze and compare your records to. This fixed period is driven based on when the accounting "books" are closed for the day. Although there are no physical books, electronically, Citicorp closes all financial processing as of 6pm Eastern Time (3 pm Pacific Time). They then report on the state of all their financial accounts as of that time, e.g., Benefit Draw Down report, Daily Administrative Actions report, etc. If California does the same, then California can compare its record of activity to Citicorp's record of activity to ensure nothing was missed or mishandled. This is exactly what SARS does. If your county sends over a benefit issuance files at 1pm today, SARS will validate the contents of this file to the activity detail reported by Citicorp today. However, since Citicorp cannot send this activity detail until after they have completed all their reporting runs (commencing after 3pm Pacific Time), SARS will not receive this information until sometime after 5pm Pacific Time and the actual comparison will not occur until that night's batch run. This therefore means that you will not see the results of this comparison until the next business day, explaining the need to perform reconciliation one day in the past. To complete the scenario described so far, you must also understand that if your county sends over an issuance file at 4pm Pacific Time, SARS will not attempt to validate the contents of this file against the Citicorp records until the next nights batch run, which means you will not review the results of this comparison until two days from now. This is because the authorization file missed the 3pm cutoff meaning Citicorp will not report its postings in this night's activity, since the "books" are already

closed.  The activity for this authorization file will appear in tomorrows activity file which SARS will not received until tomorrow night and therefore will not be able to analyze and report back to you until the following morning.

These reconciliation timing concepts should not be confused with what is actually occurring when you transmit a file to Citicorp.  The minute that Citicorp receives an authorization file from your county, Citicorp will apply the benefits it contains to the account balances of the affected clients.  These clients will then have immediate access to these benefits.  Reconciliation however, works off of a fixed reporting cycle and therefore does not reflect the current state of affairs.  This means you cannot use SARS to determine the current state of an account, only the historical record.  You must use the Citicorp system to determine the current state.

The rest of this section describes the SARS screens you would use to perform daily reconciliation, i.e., the screens that report on the results of the nightly comparison of state records to Citicorp records.  SARS places all these reconciliation screens under a single menu item call Reconciliation Reports.

## 3.1   COUNTY RECONCILIATION ACTIVITIES

To gain access to the reconciliation reports function click on the **Reconciliation Reports** link from the SARS Main Menu shown in Figure 27.



**Figure 27: SARS Main Menu**

> ➢ **Click** the **Reconciliation Reports** link

After clicking on this link you are taken to the Reconciliation Reports menu, which provides links to all of the reconciliation reports (refer to Figure 28). There may be some cases where you will need to look directly at a particular report instead of going through the reconciliation process. This screen will allow you to go directly to any of the reconciliation reports that you wish to view.

**Figure 28: Reconciliation Reports Menu**

### 3.1.1   Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report

The reconciliation process begins with the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) report. This is a highest level of data, providing reconciliation data at the Food Stamp and Cash account levels. You can access this window by clicking on the **Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1)** link on the Main Menu.

> ➢ **Click** on **Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1)** link

> ➢ **Wait** for the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) screen to display

> ➢ **Click** on the Go! button to populate the screen

Figure 29 illustrates the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) screen.

**Figure 29: Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1)**

To perform EBT reconciliation you should analyze each of the variance lines.  Zeros in all these lines means there are no variances and therefore no issues to investigate.  If they are not zero, **Obligation variance** should equal the sum of the **Issuance Variance** and **Redemption Variance**.  If it does not, the **Unexplained Variance** will not be zero.  For County users, this should never happen for Food Stamps and if it does, it indicates a significant problem because funds being reported by CEFS are not corresponding within their own reports or the county's.  For cash, the only time that an unexplained variance should exist is when the county has not entered the bank withdrawal amount (refer to section 4.1, County Bank Data). If bank data has been entered and an unexplained variance does exist, assuming Update Outstanding Variances has run (refer to section 4.4, Update Outstanding Variances), it also indicates a significant problem requiring immediate attention.  In such a situation, you may want to call the SARS Help Desk for assistance.

Non-zero values in the Issuance Variance or Redemption Variance fields indicate a <u>potential</u> problem.  If a variance exists for either Food Stamps or Cash[2], you should investigate further to determine what is causing this variance.  If the variance is very large on the issuance variance line, one of the first things to check is that all of the appropriate files have been fed into the SARS application. To check this you can either go to the Reconciliation Messages report, which identifies any anomalies encountered while importing the data (refer to section 3.1.10 for more information) or you can go to the Input Files Processed (Level 4A – View By Date) report.  Refer to section 3.1.6 for a description of the Level 4 reports.  Any other variances will likely require you to drill down to the Benefit Type Reconciliation Level 2 report or Case Reconciliation report.

### 3.1.2  Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) Report

The Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) report shows the variances at the Benefit Type level, as illustrated in Figure 30.



**Figure 30: Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2)**

Figure 29 is the result of selecting the Food Stamps link from the Level 1 report.

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[2] If your county does not participate in the Cash program then zero's will be shown for Cash.

➢ **Click** on the **Food Stamps** link on the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Screen.

➢ **Wait** for the Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) screen to display

➢ **Click** on the Go! button to populate the screen display.

In this example, variances are shown for the Food Stamp Program and Disaster Food Stamp Program. For the Cash Account Type, up to 25 different cash Benefit Types could be displayed. You can access the Level 2 report for Food Stamps by clicking on the Food Stamps link in Figure 29 or by selecting the Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) Sub Menu item from the tool bar.

This screen allows you to narrow down exactly which benefit types are causing the variance. For Food Stamps it will almost always be the FSP benefit type since DFSP, i.e., Disaster Food Stamps is used so rarely. For Cash however, it could be one or more of up to 25 possible Benefit Types. Once you discover the Benefit Type that is causing the variance, you can drill down into the detail of the Benefit Type's activity by clicking on the Benefit Type's link.

### 3.1.3   Benefit Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) Report

To "drill-down" to even greater detail for a particular Benefit Type, over and above what is provided by the Level 2 Report, you can either click on the Benefit Type link, e.g., **FSP**, on the Level 2 Report, see Figure 30 on the previous page, or you can select a Level 3 report from the Sub Menu item on the tool bar. By clicking on the Benefit Type link, you are automatically placed on the Benefit Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) report. You will want to access this report if you are investigating an issuance variance, the most common type of variance. However, there are two other Level 3 reports, the Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) and the Remaining Obligation (Level 3C). Both of these reports have their own purpose in reconciling variances but both must be accessed from the Reconciliation Reports Menu or the Sub Menu on the tool bar (assuming that you are currently viewing Reconciliation Reports). These reports are described in the next two sections. This section deals solely with the Benefit Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A).

Assume for this purpose that you are on the screen illustrated in Figure 30 and opt to access the Level 3A report for Food Stamps via the link provided. You choose this option because an issuance variance is noted in the Level 2 display for FSP.

➢ **Click** on the **FSP** link to navigate to the Food Stamp Program detail on the Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) report

➢ **Wait** for the Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) screen to display

➢ **Click** on the Go! button to populate the Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) screen.

The Benefit Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) report shows the benefit issuance

(top portion) and the benefit returns (bottom portion) for a particular Benefit Type, FSP, as illustrated in Figure 31.



**Figure 31: Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A)**

In the example provided in Figure 31, if viewing August 6, 2002, you can see that

$166 of the variance is a carry over from a previous reporting day (Yesterday's Outstanding Variance).  If you want to know what caused this variance, you would probably want to go back to the previous day where it first appeared and investigate it.  However, as can be seen in the screen displayed, this variance eventually clears itself up on Thursday, August 7, 2002.  Further investigation shows that it was an authorization that was sent to Citicorp on August 1, 2002 but was not posted by them until August 7, 2002.  This is important to know on the day that it occurs since a client is not receiving the benefits that they might expect to receive.  Section 3.1.7, Case Level Reconciliation, shows how you can actually identify the case in question.

Another "would be" variance on this report is $405 associated with Benefit Returns on August 6, 2002.  The system was able to find verifiable detail for $135 of benefit returns for that day but CEFS is reporting $540.  This originally resulted in the $405 variance. As it turns out, this was the result of bug in the Citicorp system and required extensive investigation resulting in a correction to the Citicorp system. However Citicorp could not correct the history so after county verification that the problem was fixed, a $405 adjustment was required in SARS to offset the original $405 variance.  Both of these examples, the $166 issuance variance and the $405 returns adjustment are real life examples and help illustrate the importance of reconciling information on a daily basis.

### 3.1.4   Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) Report

The Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) window provides the detail behind the Redemption Variance line item on the Level 2 and Level 1 windows.  Unlike the Level 3A report, the Level 3B provides the detail for all Account Types and Benefit Types on a single window display.  To access the Level 3B report, you must use the **Sub Menu** drop down box as illustrated in Figure 32.



**Figure 32: Navigate to the Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) Report**

Figure 33 on the next page illustrates the resultant display from the selection in

Figure 32.

**California Home**     Thursday, October 24, 2002

**Welcome to California**    HOLLYWOOD

**SARS Reconciliation Reports**

**Redemption Reconciliation (Level3B)**      User Manual | Logout

**Main Menu:** Reconciliation Reports ▾     **Sub Menu:** Redemption Reconciliation (Level3B) ▾

Prev | 08/05/2002 | Next | Go! | ☐ Request | Day ▾ | Alameda ▾ | \*\*\* Account Type \*\*\* ▾ | \*\*\* Benefit Type \*\*\* ▾

| County: Alameda | 08/05/2002 Monday | 08/06/2002 Tuesday | 08/07/2002 Wednesday | Activity Date 08/08/2002 Thursday | 08/09/2002 Friday | 08/10/2002 Saturday | 08/11/2002 Sunday | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reported Drawdown (CEFS)** | | | | | | | | |
| **Food Stamp Benefits** | | | | | | | | |
| FSP | $138,601.33 | $184,576.44 | $202,823.79 | $225,908.47 | $226,595.02 | $239,308.03 | $203,789.86 | $1,421,602.94 |
| DFSP | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| Calculated CEFS Total | $138,601.33 | $184,576.44 | $202,823.79 | $225,908.47 | $226,595.02 | $239,308.03 | $203,789.86 | $1,421,602.94 |
| Adjustment | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| Adjusted CEFS Total | $138,601.33 | $184,576.44 | $202,823.79 | $225,908.47 | $226,595.02 | $239,308.03 | $203,789.86 | $1,421,602.94 |
| CEFS Reported Total | $138,601.33 | $184,576.44 | $202,823.79 | $225,908.47 | $226,595.02 | $239,308.03 | $203,789.86 | $1,421,602.94 |
| Today's Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |
| Yesterday's Outstanding Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |
| Today's Outstanding Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |
| **Cash Benefits** | | | | | | | | |
| TANF | $351,750.59 | $331,110.71 | $199,804.27 | $150,833.71 | $121,045.46 | $88,148.75 | $61,266.76 | $1,303,960.25 |
| CAIPR | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CAPINQ | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CAPIQA | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CAPISA | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CWALL | $40.25 | $218.27 | $200.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $458.52 |
| CWLI2 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CWLITO | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| CWMX | $.00 | $13.88 | $.00 | $541.50 | $.00 | $20.55 | $.00 | $575.93 |
| CWTWO | $108,449.21 | $96,979.53 | $51,270.21 | $36,931.78 | $22,479.54 | $18,923.65 | $20,881.51 | $355,915.43 |
| CWZERO | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| ECA | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| EXMPT | $101.50 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $101.50 |
| GA | $26,676.52 | $28,232.97 | $16,552.35 | $12,590.78 | $10,786.88 | $9,406.32 | $4,593.83 | $108,839.65 |
| GAWEP | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| IACAPI | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| IASSI | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| LIMG | $1,306.25 | $209.08 | $201.75 | $200.00 | $25.19 | $1.61 | $.00 | $1,943.88 |
| RCA | $778.40 | $1,106.00 | $993.61 | $420.00 | $140.25 | $800.25 | $1,205.85 | $5,444.36 |
| TOTANF | $108,554.81 | $101,123.18 | $49,280.57 | $42,620.68 | $30,676.01 | $20,593.94 | $13,383.83 | $366,233.02 |
| ZEMPT | $107,847.13 | $97,306.57 | $66,759.45 | $39,846.35 | $34,777.49 | $25,477.71 | $14,819.13 | $386,833.83 |
| ZERO | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| ZMLIMG | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| Cash Total | $705,504.66 | $656,300.19 | $385,062.21 | $283,984.80 | $219,930.82 | $163,372.78 | $116,150.91 | $2,530,306.37 |
| Adjustment | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| Adjusted CEFS Total | $705,504.66 | $656,300.19 | $385,062.21 | $283,984.80 | $219,930.82 | $163,372.78 | $116,150.91 | $2,530,306.37 |
| Unapplied Redemption | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 |
| Calculated Total | $705,504.66 | $656,300.19 | $385,062.21 | $283,984.80 | $219,930.82 | $163,372.78 | $116,150.91 | $2,530,306.37 |
| County Clearing Statement (Cash) | $705,504.66 | $656,300.19 | $385,062.21 | $283,984.80 | $219,930.82 | $163,372.78 | $116,150.91 | $2,530,306.37 |
| Today's Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |
| Yesterday's Outstanding Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |
| Today's Outstanding Variance | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | $.00 | |

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**Figure 33: Benefit Redemption (Level 3B)**

➢ **Click** on **Benefit Redemption (Level 3B)** from the **Sub Menu** drop down

box

➢ **Wait** for the Benefit Redemption (Level 3B) screen to display

➢ **Click** on the ⌊Go!⌋ button to populate the Benefit Redemption (Level 3B) screen.

Figure 33 on the previous page illustrates the Benefit Redemption (Level 3B) screen, which shows the benefits redeemed for each benefit type.   For Food Stamps, it compares this total to what CEFS is reporting will be draw down from FNS.  For cash, it compares the total cash against what the county indicated was withdrawn from their bank account on that day.  If there is a large cash redemption variance, check the county clearing statement line.  If zero, the value has not been entered, or if entered, the variance totals may not have been recalculated by the system (see section 4.4, Update Outstanding Variances for additional detail).

It is not uncommon to see a lag in the entry of the county clearing statement.  The treasurer may not receive the withdrawal information until the next business day and when entered, the system will not reset the variance until the next day, unless the Calculate Outstanding Variances is run manually (refer to section 4.4).

This window provides a quick view of what was redeemed by benefit type for any given day.  Its contents may be useful to the county for other reporting purposes.

### 3.1.5   Remaining Obligation (Level 3C) Report

The Remaining Obligation (Level 3C) window is the same as the Level 2 window except that it is specific to a Benefit Type like the Level 3A report.  To access the Level 3C report, you must use the **Sub Menu** drop down box as illustrated in Figure 34.



**Figure 34: Navigate to Remaining Obligation (Level 3C)**

After doing so, you should verify that the Account Type and Benefit Type are

properly set, as shown in Figure 35.



**Figure 35: Remaining Obligation (Level 3C) Navigation Bar Setting**

➤ **Click** on **Remaining Obligation (Level 3C)** from the **Sub Menu** drop down box

➤ **Wait** for the Benefit Redemption (Level 3B) screen to display

➤ **Ensure** Account Type and Benefit Type are set

➤ **Click** on the Go! button to populate the Remaining Obligation (Level 3C) screen.



**Figure 36: Remaining Obligation (Level 3C)**

The Remaining Obligation (Level 3C) report details the obligation variance for a

specific Benefit Type, as illustrated in Figure 36 on the previous page.

### 3.1.6   Input Files Processed (Level 4) Report

The Level 4 view is a listing of the files and reports that have been processed by SARS. This is used to ensure that the necessary data has been fed into the SARS system. If files or reports have not been properly processed by the system it will result in a variance. If a file is not included on this screen for a particular process date then it has not been processed by the SARS application.

There are two versions of the Level 4 report, the Level 4A – View By Date, and the Level 4B – View By File. The first provides a list of all files that were received for a given day.  This is typically the view that a user would use to determine if a file is missing as a result of a large Issuance Variance on the Level 1 screen.  To access this view, you will need to either select it from the Reconciliation Reports Main Menu or select it from the Sub Menu list as illustrated in Figure 37.



**Figure 37: Navigate to the Input Files Processed (Level 4A View By Date)**

> ➢ From the **Sub Menu click** on the **Input Files Processed (Level 4A – View By Date)** to view the files and reports that have been processed by SARS for a given day.

**Figure 38: Input Files Processed (Level 4A View By Date)**

Figure 38 shows the Input Files Processed (Level 4A – View By Date) window. You should have all the files for a given process date. Each day SARS should process and import into the system the following files:

- Daily Food Stamps Benefit Authorization File

- Daily Cash Benefit Authorization File (optional)

- Daily Food Stamps Benefit Authorization Return File

- Daily Cash Benefit Authorization Return File (optional)

- Unlinked Benefits File

- Account Activity File

- Benefit Draw Report

- Administrative Actions Report

Also, near month end, the following files will show up:

- Monthly Food Stamps Benefit Authorization File

- Monthly Cash Benefit Authorization File (optional)

- Monthly Food Stamps Benefit Authorization Return File

- Monthly Cash Benefit Authorization Return File (optional)

The Unlinked Benefits file, Account Activity file, Benefit Draw Down report and Administrative Actions report should be received every day. If they are missing, you

should contact the SARS Help Desk, as this is a serious problem.  The Authorization files may or may not be present.  You as a county user will know if your county sent a file on this day to Citicorp.  If you did and the file is not present, again you may want to contact the SARS Help Desk to determine the reason the file is missing.  You should note however, that SARS is a reconciliation system based on the 3pm cutoff switch date.  This means that authorization files sent before 3pm for a given day will be reflected in that day's activity and displayed on that day's level 4 display.  However, files sent after 3pm on that day will show up on the next day's level 4 display since the reconciliation for that detail will not apply until then.  Also note that reconciliation is always done in the past so files sent after 3pm today will not show up for reconciliation until the day after tomorrow (refer to the introduction to this section for additional detail).

When viewing this screen, you have the option to view the contents of a specific file, as illustrated in Figure 39.



**Figure 39: Benefit Issuance Import File Report**

This is accomplished by clicking on the view link provided beside each file.

> ➢ **Click** on **View** to access a summarized view of a file or report.

This is very useful when trying to determine if the file SARS received and processed balances with the file the county believes they sent.  The view option breaks down the contents of the received file in a manner that allows the county to compare it to their eligibility system.  Figure 39 on the previous page illustrates what you would see if viewing the Cash Monthly Issuance file (seventh file listed in Figure 38).

As you can see, the file is broken down by Issuance and Voids within Benefit Type. Additionally, the dollar amounts are reported based on availability date.  You should use this report when cross-checking between what you believe the your system sent and what SARS said it received.  SARS then takes care of ensuring that these files reconcile with all other EBT activity.

In addition to being able to view a file's contents, some files may also be downloaded.  Currently, this download capability only applies to the Benefit Draw report, as illustrated in figure 38. It provides an ASCII flat file version of the report to all counties to download it and load it into a spreadsheet for their other reconciliation duties, such as county eligibility system reconciliation tasks. To download the Benefit Draw Report, you will need to click the **Download** link.

> ➢ **Click** on **Download** link to download the file

Upon clicking **Download**, the window illustrated in Figure 40 will be displayed.
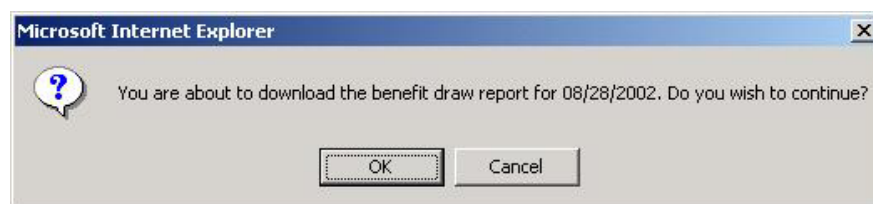


**Figure 40: Benefit Draw Download Confirmation**

This window requests you to confirm the download request.  If you click yes, you will be presented with another window requesting you to specify if you want to open the file or save it to your computer, as shown in Figure 41 on the next page.
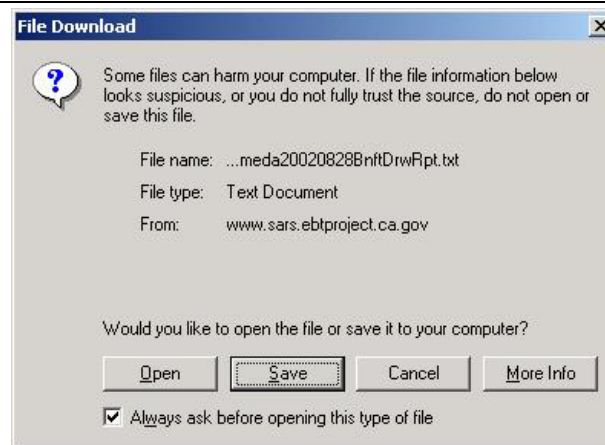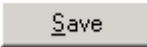
**Figure 41: Benefit Draw Download Specification**

Clicking the [Open] button will result in the file being downloaded and placed in the application that is associated with ".txt" files. For windows, this results in Notepad being opened with this file.  If you click the [Save] button, you will be asked where to store the file on your workstation for later access.  Typically, you would simply save the file for use by another application.

The file that is saved to your workstation consists of a header record, followed by a detail record for each benefit type contained on the Benefit Draw down report, followed by a trailer record.  The file format is illustrated in Figure 42 on the next page.

The header and trailer record are identical, except for the word "Begin" and "End" to identify one from the other. The purpose of these two records is to assure the recipient of the file that the complete file was transmitted, i.e., both the header and trailer must exist as bookends to the detail data.  Each detail record contains the following fields:

> ➢ Benefit Type in positions 1 through 6: Refer to Appendix C.

> ➢ Deposited amount in positions 7 through 15: This is the same as the value shown on the Level 3A "Reported Today's Deposit" line

> ➢ Redemptions amount in positions 16 through 24: This is the value shown on the Level 3B report

> ➢ Non-Settling amount in positions 25 through 33: This is the amount shown on the Level 3A "Reported Benefit Returns" line

> ➢ Current Balance in positions 34 through 42: This is the amount shown on the Level 2 or Level 3C "CEFS Reported Obligation" line.

Each of these amounts is a nine-digit value with the first seven digits representing the integer portion (dollars) and the last two digits representing the fractional portion (cents).
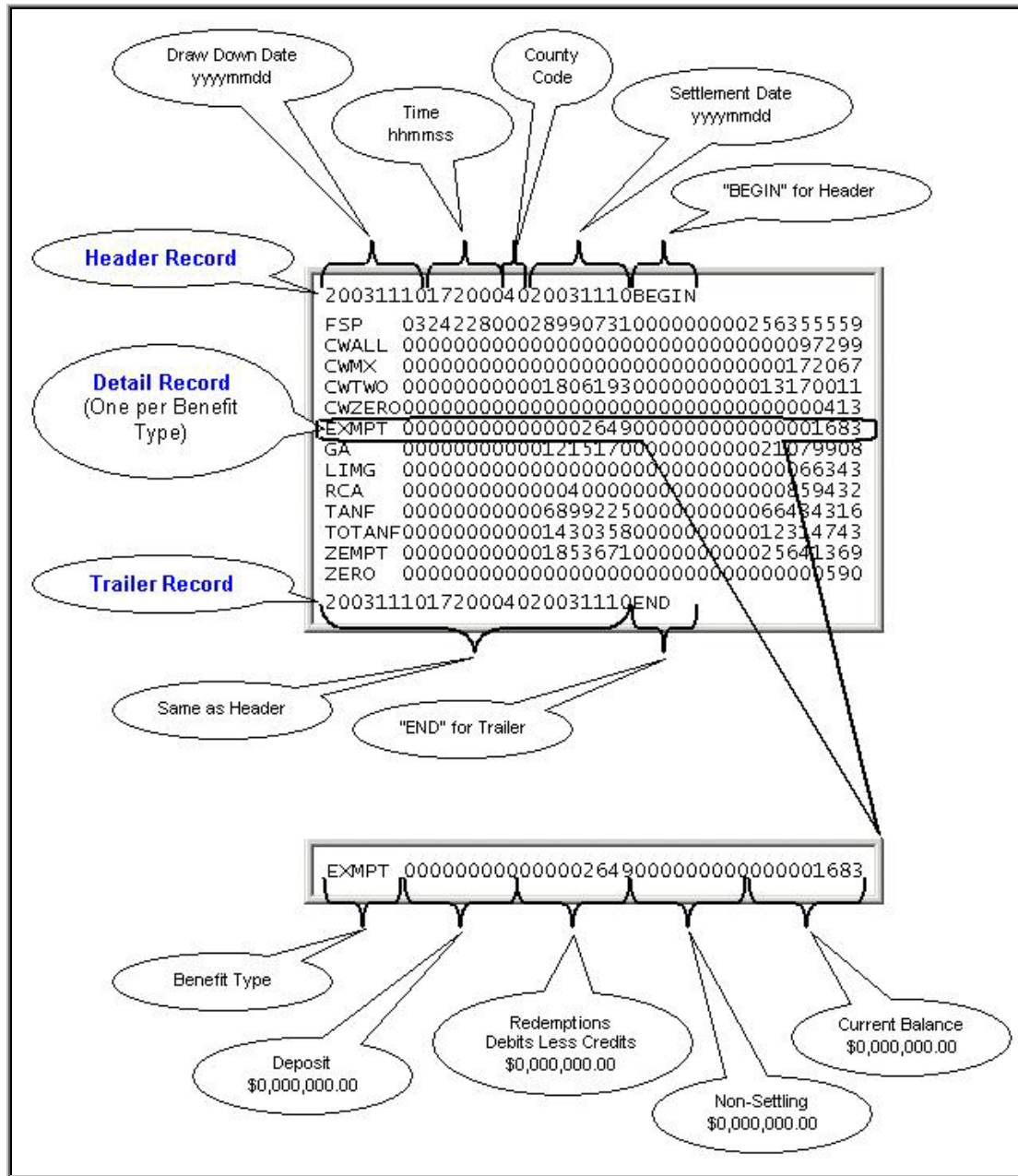
**Figure 42: Benefit Draw Download File Specification**

Input Files Processed (Level 4A – View By Date) provides a snapshot based on time. A second version of this report exists that provides a snapshot based on a specific file, listing all the occurrences of this file since a specified date, with the exception of the Benefit Draw Report since this is a report and not a file. This version, i.e., the Input Files Processed (Level 4A – View By File Name), allows a quick reconciliation of the history of a given file type and allows for a quick identification of gaps or duplications, as would be obvious based on the missing or

duplicated control numbers[3]. To access the Input Files Processed (Level 4B – View By File Name), you must select it from the Sub-menu in the same manner as you selected it for the Level 4A, as illustrated in Figure 43.



**Figure 43: Input Files Processed (Level 4B – View By File Name) Selection**

However, once selected, the window displayed requires you to select the specific file you wish to view, as illustrated in Figure 44.



**Figure 44: Input Files Processed (Level 4B – View By File Name) File Selection**

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[3] Gaps or duplications of key files are reported as errors on the SARS Reconciliation Message Reports, as described in section 3.1.10.

Figure 44 illustrates the user selecting to display the Monthly Food Stamps Benefit Issuance Files since August 28, 2002. The resultant display is shown in Figure 45.



**Figure 45: Input files Processed (Level 4B – View By File Name)**

Like the Level 4A, users are also permitted to view a summary of the contents of a specific file by clicking on the **View** link beside the file.

If you determine that a file has not been properly processed you will need to contact the SARS System Administrator and let them know which files are missing or which were not properly processed. The next day you may want to view these screens again to ensure that the correct files were processed before going to the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) report.

If the files and reports have been properly processed and a variance still exists, you will want to find additional information regarding the variance by clicking the other reconciliation windows such as the Level 2, Level 3 or Case Reconciliation report.

### 3.1.7   Case Reconciliation Report

Once you have determined that a variance exists (Level 1 report), the files and reports have been properly processed (Level 4 report), and any variance is drilled down to the Benefit Type level (Level 2 and Level 3A report), a more detailed level of information can be obtained by viewing the Case Reconciliation report.

The Case Level Reconciliation report details the benefit amounts at the case level that can cause variances or potential reconciliation issues. This report provides you with the greatest level of detail for viewing reconciliation data identifying grants at the case number and authorization number that may need review.

The Case Level Reconciliation report details benefit authorizations that fall into one of the following nine categories:

1.  <u>Benefits in the benefit issuance file but are not unlinked and did not post in the activity file</u>: This error occurs when a benefit is found in the county authorization file that should have posted but did not.  The majority of time that you see this error, it is caused by a timing issue, i.e., the EBT system actually posted it but not in time for inclusion on this day's activity file.  If this is the case, error number 3 will be issued for the same benefit tomorrow.  If this does not occur, this benefit needs to be investigated since for some reason, it is not posting and the client is therefore not getting their benefits.  The most common cause of this situation is when the benefit being posted is either Food Stamps or Cash but the case it is being applied to is of the opposite account type, e.g., a cash benefit posting to a Food Stamps only case.  There is no client EBT card that may access the new benefit type.  The only way to correct this situation is to correct the client's access type through the eligibility system.

2.  <u>Benefits linked up but were not posted in activity file</u>: This error occurs when a benefit in a previous county authorization file was originally not posted due to being unlinked, however, as of this day, it is linked and therefore would normally have been included in the activity file as a posting but was not.  The cause and resolution of this error is the same as error 1 above.

3.  <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file but were not unlinked yesterday or today:</u> This error occurs when a benefit posts but there is no corresponding issuance on the day it posts, nor was it in the unlinked file on the previous day.  For timing issues, as described in error 1 above, this is the corresponding error you will receive on the day following either an error 1 or error 2.  If this error ever occurs when there was not a corresponding error 1 or error 2 from the previous day, for this case and authorization, a serious problem has occurred and you should contact the SARS Help Desk.

4.  <u>Unlinked benefits were never issued in an issuance file</u>: This error occurs when the EBT system reports a benefit in the unlinked file but SARS has never seen this authorization on any previous benefit issuance file.  This error should only occur when the issuance file comes after 3pm but before the unlinked process runs (before 5pm-6pm).  During this brief window, benefits will not post in the activity file because the financial books have closed for that day, however, any unlinked benefits will show immediately.  SARS will not have processed the issuance file so as to synchronize with the Citicorp financial books and therefore will be unaware of this authorization until the next day.

5.  <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file but still unlinked</u>: This error occurs when the EBT system posts a benefit which was previously unlinked but rather than removing it from the unlinked file, it continues to report it as

unlinked. To date this have never occurred and if discovered, warrants a call to the SARS Help Desk.

6. <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file and became unlinked today</u>: This error occurs when EBT system posts a benefit but at the same time reports it as unlinked. To date this has never occurred and if discovered, warrants a call to the SARS Help Desk.

7. <u>Benefits that linked up today</u>: This is simply an informational message alerting you of a previously unlinked benefit that has just linked up and properly posted to the clients account.

8. <u>Benefits with an availability date of today were voided</u>: This is simply an informational message alerting you of a benefit that would have posted today but did not because it was voided before its availability date, i.e. today.

9. <u>Unlinked benefits that aged off the system today</u>: This is an informational message alerting you of a benefit that was unlinked but because it has been unlinked for over 90 days, it has been automatically deleted from the EBT system.

Of these errors and informational messages, messages 1 through 3 are common conditions that require you to track and verify. They are the most common reasons for a variance and are typically the result of a timing issue. Each day that message 1 and 2 appear, you should see a corresponding positive variance on that day for the sum of their benefit amounts. On the next day, you should see this variance cancel out with the corresponding message 3 for the same benefits. Message 3 will be a negative variance that will offset the positive variances from the previous day. It is when you do not see this corresponding error number 3 that you need to investigate further as to why these benefits did not post.

Error number 4 will appear anytime a benefit is found in the unlinked benefits file but has never appeared in any issuance file. Unlike errors 1 and 2, which only show once when they first occur, error number 4 will show up every day that the benefit appears in the unlinked file with no corresponding issuance entry. This error should only appear once for any given authorization. If it carries to a second day, this indicates a serious error condition because it is not reflective of a timing issue. When this error appears, SARS will reflect a negative variance for its amount because the unlinked benefit pool will be greater than the expected amount, lowering SARS' net obligations added for that day.

Any other errors, i.e., errors 5 and 6 or error 3 without the preceding error 1 or error 2, are an indication of a serious problem and you should call the SARS Help Desk for assistance. The information messages, i.e., messages 7, 8 and 9, are for your information only and may be useful for reconciliation to your eligibility system. They do not require any action on your part. Error messages 1 through 6 are all highlighted in red whereas Informational messages 7 through 9 are highlighted in green.

Access to the Case Level Reconciliation window is provided via the Reconciliation Reports Menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu (assuming you are currently viewing other reconciliation reports) and is illustrated in Figure 46 on the next page.

**Figure 46: Case Level Reconciliation Report**

> ➢ **Select** the **Case Level Reconciliation** menu option
> ➢ **Wait** for the Case Level Reconciliation screen to display
> ➢ **Click** on the [Go!] button to populate the Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) screen.

The example illustrated in Figure 46 corresponds with the $166 variance discussed in section 3.1.3, Benefit Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A), and illustrated in Figure 31. An error is reported that Citicorp posted a FSP benefit of $166, but there was no corresponding benefit issuance for that day. In actuality, the Benefit Issuance for this case occurred on August 1 but the benefit did not post until August 7. This can be found by viewing the Case Reconciliation screen for the day the variance first occurred, as illustrated in Figure 47 on the next page.

This condition was the result of Citicorp placing the benefit in a pending status on August 1 because the benefit was coded as a Cash Only case but the benefit being issued was a Food Stamps benefit. Currently, when this situation occurs, Citicorp does not have a method of reporting these benefits to the county or SARS so the out-of-balance condition occurs, i.e., the $166 variance. SARS can be used to identify these benefits so that the county can correct them to ensure the client gets their benefits timely.

**Figure 47: Case Level Reconciliation Report**

### 3.1.8    Reconciliation Adjustments Report

Adjustments are captured in SARS to accommodate variances that cannot be corrected by the source system(s) but a valid reason exists for the variance. SARS needs to be updated to clear out the variance, as it is no longer applicable. Situations like this arise if the Citicorp system was to have a problem and after correcting the problem, they cannot regenerate the corrected history for SARS. SARS is therefore holding information that is to a certain degree, no longer in sync with Citicorp. An adjustment is therefore added to re-sync the systems and the adjustment is recorded with a detail explanation of why the adjustment is valid, as well as the circumstances that lead up to the adjustment.

When adjustments are created, they are recorded in the Adjustment Data Entry screen, described in section 4.2., County Adjustments. After being recorded, they are displayed on the Reconciliation Adjustments report, as illustrated in Figure 48 on the next page. Access to this window is provided via the Reconciliation Reports Menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu (assuming you are currently viewing other reconciliation reports).


- ➢ **Select** the **Reconciliation Adjustments** menu option

- ➢ **Wait** for the Reconciliation Adjustments screen to display

- ➢ **Click** on the `Go!` button to populate the Reconciliation Adjustments display.

**Figure 48: Reconciliation Adjustment Report**

Most of the time when a variance exists, an adjustment will not be necessary. Typically, there is a reasonable explanation for the variance. It is a good idea to wait a few days to see if the variance works itself out. If after a few days the variance persists, then further investigation is required and you should contact the SARS Help Desk for additional assist, before adding an adjustment.

### 3.1.9   Unapplied Transactions Report

Unapplied transactions occur when someone returns money to an EBT account that was never authorized as an EBT grant. This happens particularly at the startup of the EBT environment within a county. For example, if a client uses Food Stamps coupons to perform a purchase then later receives their EBT card, any return of goods purchased using Food Stamps will be credited to the EBT account. However, there was never any Food Stamp EBT benefit authorized by the county. The original authorization was for Food Stamps coupons.

When this occurs, a specific transaction is recorded in the system. Since there was no originating EBT grant to apply it to, the benefit type of the transaction gets classified as "unapplied". Later when the client redeems these benefits, i.e., the funds they had deposited from the return, the grant debited also becomes classified as an "unapplied" transaction type, i.e., benefit type. Unapplied transactions are a special breed of transaction within SARS because from the county authorization perspective, they do not exist since they were never issued as EBT grants. However, because funds actually exchanged hands, and accounts, from a funding perspective, the occurrence of this transaction must be accounted for. This causes the need for some special processing within SARS to handle its reporting of these transactions and this handling differs between Food Stamps and Cash. Numbers end up being adjusted based on who is viewing the data, the program being viewed and the unapplied activity that occurs.

For Food Stamps, the state deals with funding so only the state needs to see the unapplied amounts and therefore the unapplied totals are removed from the county totals. For Cash however, the county handles the funding and therefore the

unapplied transactions need to be reflected at the county level. One report is provided that itemizes the unapplied transactions, regardless of who is viewing it or the program being viewed.  This report provides an audit trail of all Unapplied Transactions.

To access this report, you must either select the Unapplied Issuance and Redemption option from the Reconciliation Reports Menu or from the navigation bar Sub-menu, assuming that you are currently viewing other reconciliation reports.


> ➢ **Select** the **Unapplied Issuance and Redemption** menu option


This report is illustrated in figure 49 and differs from other reconciliation reports in that you do not have to click the [Go!] button to have it populate itself.



**Figure 49: Unapplied Transaction Report**


### 3.1.10  SARS Reconciliation Messages Report

The SARS Reconciliation Messages report should be one of the first reports you view each day. It provides a message log by date that displays any errors that were encountered by the automated system while attempting to import and reconcile data.

It is particularly useful to determine if any required files are missing.  To access this report you can either select it from the Reconciliation Reports Menu or from the navigation bar Sub-menu, assuming that you are currently viewing other reconciliation reports.

> ➢ **Select** the **SARS Reconciliation Messages** menu option

This report is illustrated in figure 50 and differs from other reconciliation reports in that you do not have to click the Go! button to have it populate itself.



**Figure 50: Reconciliation Messages Report**

### 3.1.11  Potential Reconciliation Items Report

State regulations require that counties track and manage potential reconciliation problems such as rejected and unlinked benefit authorizations.  In the case of these two types of transactions, the eligibility system has created an authorization but because of some problem, they have not become an issuance. Corrective action is required by the CWA to get the eligibility system and the EBT system back in sync.

Additionally, since EBT administrative terminal activity bypasses the eligibility system, use of it also creates the potential of reconciliation problems. Unless this administrative terminal activity is accurately entered into the eligibility system, the county eligibility system has the potential of being out of sync with the EBT system. This activity includes administrative terminal benefit issuance and voids, repayment transactions, and coupon conversions.

Managing these potential problems means that on a case-by-case basis, the CWA should verify that appropriate corrective action has been taken and that the eligibility system is synchronized with the EBT system.  Such verification probably means looking up the respective cases in the eligibility system and making sure that they have been handled correctly and consistently with the data in the EBT system.

Since all counties have the same issue in the tracking of these items, SARS provides a report that lists these problematic transactions with sufficient detail to allow the CWA to research and verify they have been dealt with correctly.  This report, the Potential Reconciliation Items report, contains a check box to allow the

user to check each item off as having been verified.  Figure 51 provides a sample of this report.



**Figure 51: Potential Reconciliation Items Report**

The previous figure illustrates how the potential reconciliation items report might look for a given day, in this case, January 13, 2003.  Items are listed in order of Local Office code (primary sort) and then date (secondary sort).  The secondary sort lists the newest items first.  The primary sort lists items in the order designated by the Sort Direction identified at the top of the report.  You can change which field acts as the primary sort simply by clicking on its column heading.  The primary sort's column heading is always in <span style="color:red">red</span>.  The secondary sort is always Issue Date.

The Activity Type column identifies the type of reconciliation item being viewed.  The types listed here will be based on the selections made at the top of the screen.   The potential reconciliation items report currently supports the following types of potential reconciliation items:

- **ATA**: Admin Terminal Benefit Authorization: Benefits that have been

authorized via the CEFS Administrative Terminal and need to be entered into the county eligibility system.

- **ATV**: Admin Terminal Benefit Pending Void: Benefits that have been voided via the CEFS Administrative Terminal and need to be entered into the county eligibility system.

- **BARJ**: Batch Benefit Authorization Reject: Benefit Authorizations that have been sent via batch to CEFS but were rejected by CEFS.

- **BVRJ**: Batch Benefit Pending Void Reject: Benefit Authorization Voids that have been sent via batch to CEFS but were rejected by CEFS.

- **CC**: Admin Terminal Coupon Conversion: Food Stamp benefits that have been converted to coupons via the administrative terminal.  These are non-settling transactions.

- **CCX**: Coupon Conversion Expungement: Any Inconsequential amount that has been expunged because it could not be converted into a Food Stamps' coupon.

- **CX**: Cash Expungement: Cash program benefits that have been expunged because they have not been used in 270 days.

- **FSX**: Food Stamps Expungement: Food Stamps program benefits that have been expunged because they have not been used in 270 days.

- **H2HA**: Host-to-Host Benefit Authorization: Benefits that have been authorized via the Host-to-Host interface.

- **H2HC**: Host-to-Host Coupon Conversion: Food Stamp benefits that have been converted to coupons via the Host-to-Host interface.

- **H2HR**: Host-to-Host Repayment: Repayments that have been received through the Host-to-Host interface.

- **H2HV**: Host-to-Host Benefit Pending Void: Benefits that have been voided via the Host-to-Host interface.

- **RPAY**: Admin Terminal Repayment: Repayments that have been entered through the administrative terminal.  These are non-settling transactions.

- **ULKA**: Unlinked Benefits Aged: Unlinked benefits that have been dropped by CEFS because they have existed for over 90 days in an unlinked status.

- **UNLK**: Unlinked Benefits Active: Benefits that are currently unlinked due to missing or mismatched demographics data.

Once an issue is resolved, it is checked off.  This is either done by the batch system or can be done by the user.  Currently, the only item that the system will automatically check off is an unlinked benefit that gets resolved, i.e., stops showing up on the Unlinked Benefits file.  The batch system recognizes this condition and marks the previous days logging of the unlinked benefit as now resolved.  The user is responsible for manually checking off all other items.  Once an item is marked as resolved, the user that resolved it and the date it was resolved will be recorded in the

columns to the right. Additionally, the status will be set to "R", resolved. Users can then filter out resolved issues by using the Resolution Status radio buttons at the top of the report. In Figure 51, the "All" radio button is checked so both resolved and unresolved items are listed. Selection of the "Unresolved" radio button will result in a display where only unchecked items are listed.

The Resolution Status Radio buttons are located in the area of the report that is used, in conjunction with the navigation bar, to control what the report displays. Figure 52 illustrates this section.



**Figure 52: Potential Reconciliation Items Report Control Section**

The Potential Reconciliation Control Section provides the following report control features:

- **Number of Days**: This is the number of days from the navigation bar date into the past that are to be displayed on the report. The Issue Date column reflects the dates being displayed. A value of 1 means only items with an issue date equal to the date on the navigation bar will be displayed. A value of 2 means the navigation bar date and the day before this date. There is no restriction on the number of days selected, other than it cannot be zero.

> It is strongly suggested that if "Unlinked Benefits Active" is checked, the Number of Days be set to 1. This is because the unlinked list each day is the full set of unlinks for that day. Benefits unlinked for multiple days will show up multiple times on this listing if more than one day is selected. For medium size to large size counties, this can make this listing unmanageable. This restriction only applies to the Unlinked Benefits Aged as all the other item types show up only on the day that they first occur.

  When you first enter this screen, a message is displayed at the top of this control section requesting that the Number of Days be specified. All other fields have default values.

- **Resolution Status**: Allows you to filter the items displayed based on resolution status. The option "All" applies no filter. The option "Unresolved" will only display items that do not have a check ☑ in the Resolved column. The option "Resolved" will only display items that do have a check ☑ in the Resolved column.

- **Sort Direction**: Defines the direction of the primary sort. The secondary sort
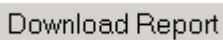
is, Issue date, is always in date descending sequence (most current date first).

- **Activity Types To Include**: This area provides fifteen checkboxes allowing you to customize which activity types will be displayed on the report. This section remembers which activity types were previously selected so that the next time you return to this report, your previous activity type selections will be automatically checked.

Whenever you change these values, you must click the Go! button to have the screen refreshed based on this new criteria.

The "**Updated as of:**" caption simple indicates when the data available to this report was last updated by batch.

How a county uses this report is completely under their discretion. They may choose to use this report as informational only or as a working tool where they can track which activities have been verified, using the Resolve checkbox. Alternatively, they can download the detail of this report into a format that can be imported to Excel so it can be distributed to other staff members. To download this report, you must first have the report display what you want and then select the Download Report button. Selection of this button will result in the window illustrated in Figure 53 being displayed.
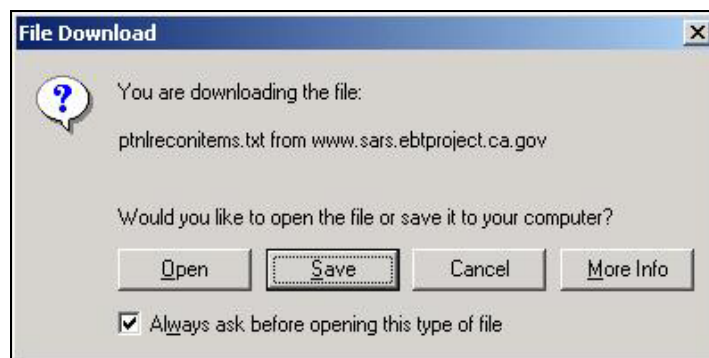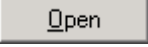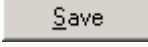


**Figure 53: Potential Reconciliation Items Download Confirmation**

This window asks if you want to open the file or save it to your computer. Clicking the Open button will result in the file being downloaded and placed in the application that is associated with ".txt" files. For windows, this results in Notepad being opened with this file. If you click the Save button, you will be asked where to store the file on your workstation for later access. Typically, you would simply save the file for use later.

The file that is saved to your workstation is a comma-delimited file with each comma-delimited column representing one of the data columns from the report. Columns are recorded in the file in the same order they are display on the screen. This means that the comma-delimited columns are Office, Issue Date, Activity Type,

Case Number, Benefit Type, Auth Number, Amount, Available Date, Resolution Status, Resolution User Id, and Resolution Status Date. An example of the file downloaded for the screen displayed in Figure 51 is illustrated in Figure 54.



**Figure 54: Potential Reconciliation Items File Layout**

Figure 54 omits the first line of the file, which is the column headings. The column headings are provided so that when this file is imported into another application, the column headings describing each columns content can optionally be loaded as well.

You can import the contents of this file into Excel by opening the file through Excel (start Excel first and then open the file). When you do so, Excel will present you with the text import wizard dialog box. Under the statement "Choose the file type that best describes your data", select the Delimited radio button and click the next button. The Excel text import wizard will present you with the second of three dialog boxes. Uncheck the "Tab" delimiter and check the "Comma" delimiter checkbox. Click the Next button. On the third and final dialog box, set the column data format radio button to "text". This will set the first column to text. Optionally, you can set all the column formats as follows:

| Column | Format | Column | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| Office | Text | Amount | General |
| Issue Date | Date | Available Date | Date |
| Activity Type | Text | Resolution Status | Text |
| Case Number | Text | Resolution User Id | Text |

| Column | Format | | Column | Format |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benefit Type | Text | | Resolution Status Date | Date |
| Auth Number | Text | | | |

After you click "Finish", the file will be placed in an Excel worksheet.

### 3.1.12  Fraud Draw Down Report

The Fraud Draw Down Report is used by authorized state and county fraud users to view funds that have been allocated and used for fraud detection.  Funds designated to fraud are categorized with the SFSP (State Law Enforcement Bureau Food Stamp Program) benefit type.

County fraud users viewing this report will see the funds associated with their county only. This is controlled through the county designation within the navigation bar. State Fraud users (DSS Fraud staff) will be able to set the county value to the county they wish to review or set it to the "State of California" to view a single report listing all the counties in county number/name order.

Access to the Fraud Draw Down report is provided via the Reconciliation Reports Menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu (assuming you are currently viewing other reconciliation reports) and is illustrated in Figure 55.



**Figure 55: Fraud Draw Down Report**

> ➢ **Select** the **Fraud Draw Down Report** menu option

> ➢ **Wait** for the Fraud Draw Down report screen to display

> ➢ **Click** on the  Go!  button to populate the screen.

## 3.2 STATE ONLY RECONCILIATION REPORTS

There are five reconciliation reports that are accessible by state users only. These reports are as follows:

> ➢ Food Stamp Reconciliation report
>
> ➢ Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail report
>
> ➢ County Food Stamp Reconciliation report
>
> ➢ County Activity
>
> ➢ County Cash Reconciliation

Most of these reports deal with reconciling Food Stamps at the state level, since Food Stamps reconciliation is a state level responsibility. Some reports provide the state with the means by which to verify daily reconciliation at the county level, as per federal audit requirements.

### 3.2.1 Food Stamp Reconciliation Report

The Food Stamp Reconciliation report compares the calculated Food Stamps totals reported from the county issuance to the values reported by CEFS and the values reported by the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) AMA system. This report is illustrated in Figure 56 on the next page.

The AMA amounts reflected on this report are key entered by CDSS users on a daily basis using the State FNS Financial System Data Entry screen. Refer to section 4.3 for more information on this function.

Access to the Food Stamp Reconciliation report is provided through the Reconciliation Reports menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu. To access the screen, you should perform the following functions:

> ➢ **Select** the **Food Stamp Reconciliation** menu option
>
> ➢ **Wait** for the Food Stamp Reconciliation screen to display
>
> ➢ **Click** on the ⬚Go! button to populate the Food Stamp Reconciliation display.

Since unapplied transactions only apply to the funding source and Food Stamps is funded at the State level, the unapplied transaction amounts are shown and added into the total obligations when comparing to the AMA reported amounts.

**Figure 56: Food Stamp Reconciliation Report**

### 3.2.2   Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail Report

The Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail report displays the detail behind the issuance and settlement amounts shown on the Food Stamp Reconciliation Report.  It reflects how CDSS actually enters this data from the AMA screens.  The RE, RC, RO, and PY are the abbreviations included on the AMA report.  Figure 57 shows an example of the Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail Form.

Access to the Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail report is provided through the Reconciliation Reports menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu.  To access this screen, you should perform the following functions:

> ➢ **Select** the **Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail** menu option

> ➢ **Wait** for the Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail screen to display

> ➢ **Click** on the  Go!  button to populate the Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail display.

**Figure 57: Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail Report**

### 3.2.3   County Food Stamp Reconciliation Report

The County Food Stamp Reconciliation screen provides a quick reference tool for the state to identify Food Stamp issuance and redemption variances by county.  This eliminates the need to view each individual level 1 screen per county to determine potential reconciliation issues across the state.  This tool is primarily used as an audit check to help the state zero in on the cause of a state level variance on the state level screens.

Like the Level 1 screen, the variance displayed is an accumulated variance reported on that day, not just the variance just for that day.  In other words, in includes the previous days' variances as well. This variance is the total variance at the account type level, i.e., it is the sum of all the benefit types within the Food Stamp account type.

Access to the County Food Stamp Reconciliation report is provided through the Reconciliation Reports menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu.  To access this screen, you should perform the following functions:

> ➢ **Select** the County Food Stamp Reconciliation (State Only) option
> ➢ **Wait** for the County Food Stamp Reconciliation screen to display

Figure 58 on the next page provides an illustration of this report.  There is no need to click the Go! button for this report upon first entry, as there is minimal delay between selection and display.  However, if you change the process date, you will need to click Go! to refresh the display.

**Figure 58: County Food Stamp Reconciliation Report**

### 3.2.4 County Activity

The County Activity report provides the State with a quick reference tool to determine if each of the counties have accessed SARS and reviewed one of the key reconciliation reports for the day. The key reports are defined as the Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3A reports. The last user to have accessed one of these reports within each county is listed, along with the time and report accessed.

Access to the County Activity report is provided through the Reconciliation Reports menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu. To access this screen, you should perform the following functions:

> ➢ **Select** the County Activity (State Only) option
> ➢ **Wait** for the County Activity screen to display

Figure 59 provides an illustration of this report. There is currently no need to click Go! button for this report. However, this will be changing on the next release of SARS. This report can take over 5 seconds to display at times so the "Request" feature will be added to allow a user to request its creation in the background. This will require the enabling of the Go! button.

**Figure 59: County Activity Report**

### 3.2.5  County Cash Reconciliation

The County Cash Reconciliation screen provides a quick reference tool for the state to identify Cash issuance and redemption variances by county.  This eliminates the need to view each individual level 1 screen per county to determine potential reconciliation issues across the state.  This tool is primarily used as an audit check to help the state zero in on the cause of a state level variance on the state level screens.

Like the Level 1 screen, the variance displayed is an accumulated variance reported on that day, not just the variance just for that day.  In other words, in includes the previous days' variances as well. This variance is the total variance at the account type level, i.e., it is the sum of all the benefit types within the Cash account type.

Access to the County Cash Reconciliation report is provided through the Reconciliation Reports menu or the navigation bar Sub-menu.  To access this screen, you should perform the following functions:

➢ **Select** the County Cash Reconciliation (State Only) option

➢ **Wait** for the County Cash Reconciliation screen to display

Figure 60 provides an illustration of this report.  There is no need to click the Go! button for this report upon first entry, as there is minimal delay between selection and display.  However, if you change the process date, you will need to click Go! to refresh the display.



**Figure 60: County Cash Reconciliation Report**

## 4.    ENTERING DATA

This section describes the functions within SARS that require the actual entry of financial information or the updating of results based on this data.  The functions covered are listed on the Data entry menu, as illustrated in Figure 59, and are as follows:



**Figure 61: Data Entry Menu**

1. **County Bank Data**: To complete cash reconciliation for any given day requires that each county that does cash EBT enter funding information into SARS to balance between what SARS expects and what actually occurred. This requires that each cash county enter the daily withdrawal amount from their funding bank account.

2. **County Adjustments**: SARS provides a function to capture system adjustments that allow SARS to come back into balance with Citicorp.  This is rarely needed and only for the circumstance of when a variance is being incorrectly reported.  This typically occurs when historical information is no longer accurately reflecting the current situation and the historical information cannot be corrected or regenerated. Refer to section 4.2 for additional details.

3. **State Financial Systems Data**: To complete Food Stamps reconciliation for any given day requires that the state enter funding information into SARS to balance between what SARS expects and what actually occurred. This requires that the state enter FNS AMA values. Section 4.3 describes how to do this.

4. **Update Outstanding Variances**: If county bank data is entered or an adjustment is entered, the system will automatically recalculate the variances for the affect days that night.  However, if the county would like to see the effects of these changes prior to this, they can request that the variances be

recalculated immediately using this function.

5. **DFA 885 / FNS 46 Reports**: At the end of each month, each county must file copies of the DFA 885 Issuance reports for consolidation into the state FNS 46 Issuance Reconciliation Report. SARS provides online forms for the capture of this 885 information and the consolidation of this information into the FNS 46. Refer to section 4.5 for specifics on this functionality.

Users wishing to perform any of these data entry functions must have been granted access to the Data Entry security role within SARS.

The options listed on the Data Entry menu will populate the navigation bar sub-menu whenever you are on one of the Data Entry screens. The remaining portion of this section details out the usage of each of the functions.

## 4.1 COUNTY BANK DATA

Counties that provide cash EBT benefits are required to key-enter their county's bank drawdown, i.e., withdrawal, amount to compare it to the amount that was reported through the EBT system. This is simply one lump sum that must be key-entered on a daily basis. The county bank data is used in the Benefit Redemption (Level 3B) report to compare to what SARS calculates should have been withdrawn.

To key-enter this data into the system, you must first select the County Bank Data option from the Data Entry Menu, illustrated in Figure 60.



**Figure 62: County Bank Data List Screen**

> ➤ **Select** the **County Bank Data** menu option

Since this is not a reconciliation report, you do not have to click [Go!] when first entering this window.  You will have to click [Go!] if you change the date by overtyping it.  In this case, [Go!] is used to refresh the window based on the new parameters.  Also, the usage of the date in the navigation bar works slightly differently in that it identifies the starting date of the display.  All entries since this date will be displayed in the window.  The Day/Month, Account Type and Benefit Type have no applicability to this window and are therefore disabled.

From the County Bank Data list screen, you can edit existing entries, using the **Edit** link beside the entry, or select the **New** link to record a new withdrawal.

> ➢ **Click** the **New** link or the **Edit** link

In either case, the Data Entry screen for County Bank Data is displayed, as illustrated in Figure 61.



**Figure 63: County Bank Data Entry Screen**

There are two fields that you must enter on this screen, the Bank Statement Date and the Cash Draw Amount. The Bank Statement Date will be automatically populated with the date currently displayed in the navigation bar but can be changed.  The Cash Draw Amount and bank statement date should be entered exactly as they appear on the bank statement or withdrawal slip. The date that is entered will either be equal to the SARS redemption accrual date (as shown on the Level 3B screen), or it will be the day following.  If it is the day following, you will need to notify the SARS Help Desk so that the SARS Support Team can mark your county to apply the bank statement entry to the day prior in SARS.  You will know

when this starts occurring because the SARS process date will reflect the day before when you create an entry. Bt default, the SARS process date will be the same as the bank statement entry date. You only need to notify the SARS Help Desk once regarding this since once set, this approach will apply to the entry of all subsequent bank statements. A bank's statement date handling within a county remains consistent so once SARS is in sync with it, it will not have to be changed.

The user id field displayed is set to the your user id and cannot be changed.


> ➢ **Verify / Change** the Process Date

> ➢ **Enter** the Cash Draw Amount

> ➢ **Click** the Save button

Once the data has been correctly entered and you click the Save button, you will be taken back to the screen listing the County Bank Data (Figure 60). This allows you to review past data entry items as well as verify the item just entered.

If you notice that you entered data incorrectly prior to clicking the Save button, you may click the Clear button, which resets both fields to their original display. You may also click the Delete button when editing an entry, should you determine that this entry should not exist.


## 4.2 COUNTY ADJUSTMENTS

In rare situations, there may be cases that an out-of-balance condition exists that is explainable but cannot be corrected by the source data. This is usually a result of a problem in the systems sending the data. The problem gets detected and manually corrected but the correction never flows through the regular data chain. SARS is therefore out-of-balance and carries a variance that would never zero out. In these situations, an adjustment must be captured so that the variance is removed at the affecting day and the variance on all subsequent days returns to zero. These adjustments are then reported on the Level 3 reports as line items with totals before the adjustment and totals after the adjustment. Currently, there is one line item for issuance (Level 3A Report), one for returns (Level 3A Report), and one for redemptions (Level 3B Report)

To capture adjustments, the county adjustment screen has been developed. It is likely that an individual county would not be entering an adjustment directly as the adjustment must be researched and verified at all levels which usually involves the SARS Help Desk. However, the adjustment is captured at the county level for reporting purposes, regardless of who actually enters it.

Adding, editing, and deleting adjustments works similar to adding, editing, and deleting County Bank data, described in the previous section. To perform an adjustment, you must first select the County Adjustments option from the Data Entry

Menu.

> ➢ **Select** the **County Adjustments** menu option

This results in the display of the County Adjustments list window, as illustrated in Figure 62 on the next page.

Since this is not a reconciliation report, you do not have to click ⬚Go! when first entering this window. You will have to click ⬚Go! if you change the date by overtyping it. In this case, ⬚Go! is used to refresh the window based on the new parameters.



**Figure 64: County Adjustments List Screen**

The usage of the date in the navigation bar works slightly differently in that it identifies the starting date of the display. All entries since this date will be displayed in the window. The Day/Month, Account Type and Benefit Type have no applicability to this window and are therefore disabled. From this screen, you can access the actual adjustment entry screen, illustrated in Figure 63 on the next page.

The County Adjustments list screen allows you to access this screen to edit an existing adjustment, using the **Edit** link beside the entry, or create a new adjustment using the **New** link.

> ➢ **Click** the **New** link or the **Edit** link

In either case, the Adjustment Entry screen for Adjustments is displayed, as illustrated in Figure 63.

**Figure 65: County Adjustments Data Entry Screen**

The Adjustment Date will automatically be populated with the current date and not modifiable. It is simply used to identify when this adjustment was created. The first field the user must enter is the benefit type being adjusted, which is accomplished by selecting the applicable type from a drop down list. Valid types are listed in Appendix C and correspond to either the Food Stamps or Cash programs. The next fields for entry, also dropdown lists, are the Adjustment Type (Issuance, Return or Redemption) and a subtype. The subtype selected is optional but if selected, must be compatible with the type selected. Valid subtypes equate to the line items of the Level 3A report only, i.e., issuance and returns. The valid subtypes for issuance are as follows:

- Batch Benefit Issuance

- Batch Benefit Voids

- Rejected Batch Benefit Issuance

- Rejected Batch Benefit Voids

- Administrative Issuance

- Administrative Voids

For returns they are:

- Expungements

- Coupon Conversions

- Repayments

After selecting an applicable adjustment type and subtype, you must enter the availability date, an adjustment amount and the reason for the Adjustment. The availability date is the date that this adjustment is applicable to. The Adjustor is pre-filled with your user id.

> ➢ **Select** the Benefit Type
> ➢ **Select** the Adjustment Type
> ➢ **Select** the Adjustment Sub Type (if applicable)
> ➢ **Enter** the Availability Date
> ➢ **Enter** the Adjustment Amount
> ➢ **Enter** the Adjustment Reason
> ➢ **Click** the [Save] button

Once the data has been correctly entered and you click the [Save] button, you will be taken back to the screen listing the County Adjustments (Figure 62). This allows you to review past data entry items as well as verify the item just entered.

If you notice that you entered data incorrectly prior to clicking the [Save] button, you may click the [Clear] button, which resets all fields back to their original display.  You may also click the [Delete] button if you determine that this adjustment should not exist.

It is important that when entering an adjustment, the adjustment reason provide enough detail to allow the reader to know why the adjustment was done and what supporting information exists to support its entry. Use of adjustments to correct system balances will be greatly scrutinized by audit staff during and after their creation.

## 4.3   STATE FNS FINANCIAL SYSTEM DATA

State users will key-enter the amount reported by AMA through the State FNS Financial System on a daily basis. This information is obtained via an on-line inquiry into the AMA (FNS) system.  This online inquiry provides California EBT state users with information regarding what CEFS has reported to the USDA-FNS in regards to Food Stamps claims. This data is used in the state only Food Stamp Reconciliation report and the Food Stamp Reconciliation Detail report. These reports compare the calculated Food Stamps totals reported from the county issuance to the values reported by CEFS and the values reported by the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) AMA system.

CDSS Users will key enter the totals through the SARS State FNS Financial System Data Entry screen.  Adding, editing, and deleting AMA data works similar to adding,

editing, and deleting County Bank data, described in section 4.1. To enter AMA data, you must first select the State FNS Financial System Data option from the Data Entry Menu.

> ➢ **Select** the **State FNS Financial System Data** menu option

This results in the display of the State FNS Financial System Data list window, as illustrated in Figure 64 on the next page.



**Figure 66: State FNS Financial System Data List Screen**

Since this is not a reconciliation report, you do not have to click [Go!] when first entering this window. You will have to click [Go!] if you change the date by overtyping it. In this case, [Go!] is used to refresh the window based on the new parameters. Also, the usage of the date in the navigation bar works slightly differently in that it identifies the starting date of the display. All entries since this date will be displayed in the window. The Day/Month, Account Type and Benefit Type have no applicability to this window and are therefore disabled

From the State FNS Financial System Data list screen, you can access the State FNS Financial System Data Entry screen illustrated in Figure 65 on the next page.

The State FNS Financial System Data list screen allows you to access this screen to edit an existing entry, using the **Edit** link beside the entry, or create a new entry using the **New** link.

> ➢ **Click** the **New** link or the **Edit** link

In either case, the State FNS Financial System Data Entry screen is displayed, as

illustrated in Figure 65.



**Figure 67: State FNS Financial System Data Entry Screen**

Use the AMA system to provide you with the data necessary to populate the required data entry fields in SARS.

The Report Date field is automatically populated with the date from the navigation bar, but is modifiable. The Record Date and Time field is read-only and set to the date and time that this record is added. This field is only displayed when modifying an entry, as it is blank when creating one. It gets set when the Save button is clicked and therefore only visible when the user comes back to view this entry.

At this point, you will need to key enter the data from the AMA system in SARS.

➢ **Verify / Change** the Report Date

➢ **Enter** the Issuance amount

➢ **Enter** the Settlement (PY) amount

➢ **Enter** the Letter of Credit

➢ **Enter** the Expungement (RE) amount

➢ **Enter** the Coupon Conversion (RC) amount

➢ **Enter** the Repayment (RO) amount

➢ **Click** the Save button

Once the data has been correctly entered and you click the Save button, you will be taken back to the screen listing the State FNS Financial System Data (Figure 58).

This allows you to review past data entry items as well as verify the item just entered.

If you notice that you entered data incorrectly prior to clicking the [ Save ] button, you may click the [ Clear ] button, which resets all fields back to their original display. You may also click the [ Delete ] button if you determine that this specific State FNS Financial System Data entry should not exist.

## 4.4  UPDATE OUTSTANDING VARIANCES

SARS displays seven days worth of data on the Level 1, 2 and 3 reports, as well as the Food Stamp Reconciliation (State Only) report. This requires a substantial amount of processing to gather this data, summarize it and format it for display. In addition to the process of summarizing the data, SARS must calculate any variances between reported and calculated amounts and report on these variances as well as carry the effects of each day's variances over to each subsequent day. Carrying the effects of variances over time makes the job of dynamically building the variance results for online display an impractical approach, since each display would be required to reevaluate the current state of every day prior to the display date. Instead, SARS recalculates variances each night based on the days that are affected by the data coming in or the data entered by the user. It then stores these variances in the database for later extraction by the online system. In this way, past days are only recalculated if they need to be, based on the changes received, and recalculations, for the most part, are handled in batch. The statement "for the most part" is simply a caveat due to the existence of an online process that allows users to recalculate variances online, without waiting for batch. This allows a user, for example, to enter county bank information and then request that the variances be recalculated immediately. Although this function exists, it is rarely used. Typically, users wait until the next business day to see the results of any data entry they have done.

The Update Outstanding Variances option on the Data Entry window is used to request that variances be recalculated immediately, rather than waiting overnight. Even though this option does not result in a screen requesting user entry of data, it resides on this menu because it is only required if the user performs data entry and decides they want to see the results immediately.

Selection of the Update Outstanding Variances results in the display of the screen in Figure 66, on the next page.

> ➢ **Select** the **Update Outstanding Variances** menu option

To allow you to know when variances were last calculated for your county, or to know if variances are currently being recalculated, the system records information regarding variance calculations and displays it on the same window used to update outstanding variances, as illustrated in Figure 66.

**Figure 68: Update Outstanding Variances**

To recalculate variances, simple click on the Update Variances button.

> ➤ **CLICK** on **Update Variances** button

As an added precaution, you will be given a second chance to cancel out from performing this action.  The window shown in Figure 67 will be displayed when you click on the Update Variances button.
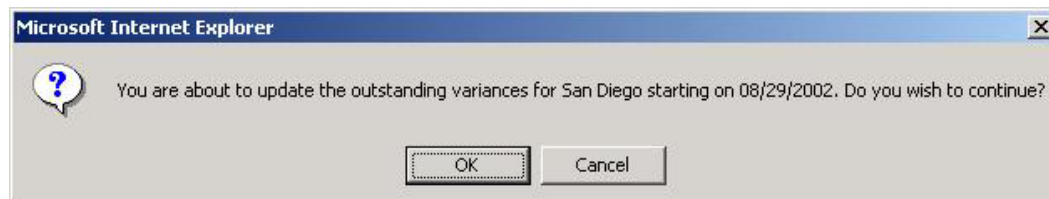


**Figure 69: Update Outstanding Variances**

The wording will be different for you, as it will reflect your county and the date you are starting the recalculation.  Variances will be recalculated from this date forward, i.e., all dates up to the current date will be recalculated.

> ➤ **CLICK** the [ OK ] button to run Update Variances.

Updating Outstanding Variances takes a significant amount of time and resources to run so should only be run if necessary.

When running, the window message will be displayed to reflect this, as illustrated in

Figure 68.



**Figure 70: Update Outstanding Variances**

At this point, you can leave this screen and come back periodically to refresh its display.  When complete, the screen will display the date and time that variances were last calculated, as previously shown in Figure 66.

## 4.5   DFA 885 / FNS 46 REPORTS

Each month, the State of California is required to submit an FNS 46 Issuance Reconciliation Report to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).  This report identifies food stamp issuance and returns as well as over issuance liabilities for the month. To produce this report, the state needs to obtain this information from each of the counties and this information must be reported separately for each of the types of food stamps issuances such as coupons, EBT, etc.  Additionally, since the State of California provides its own State Option food stamps issuance (known as the California Food Assistance Program [CFAP]), reporting needs to separate out Federal food stamps from the State Option food stamps so that the State Option food stamps are not included on the FNS 46. DSS has provided the counties with the forms DFA 885A, 885B and 885C for the capture of this information.

To assist the counties with the capture and reporting of this information, and to assist the state with the consolidation of this information into the statewide FNS 46 report, SARS has developed online versions of these forms where data can be directly entered and certified.  These forms eliminate the need to produce and mail paper documents to provide this information.  Once entered and certified by a county, the data is immediately available to the state for inclusion into the FNS 46.

**Important**: Once a county has completed the form 885A, 885B and 885C, they must certify the form by entering the certification date and checking the certification checkbox, otherwise the state will be unable to merge this data into the FNS 46.

SARS provides the following online forms for the capture and reporting of the monthly issuance data:

- **DFA 885A – Federal Issuance Reconciliation Report**: Monthly county

report of Federal issuance data to be included in the FNS 46 report.

- **DFA 885B – State Obligation Issuance Reconciliation Report**: Monthly county report of State Option issuance data that is not included on the FNS 46 report

- **DFA 885C – Total Issuance Reconciliation Report**: Monthly county report of Federal and State Option issuance data.

- **FNS 46 – Issuance Reconciliation Report**: Monthly statewide report of Federal food stamp issuance and returns. This report also captures statewide Federal over-issuance liabilities for the month and will include the sum of all county amounts reported on the DFA 885A reports as well as the investigator totals.

To obtain access to these forms, you must select the DFA 885 / FNS 46 option from the Data Entry Menu.

➢ **Select** the **DFA 885 / FNS 46** menu option

This results in the display of the Issuance Reconciliation Report list window, as illustrated in Figure 71.



**Figure 71: Issuance Reconciliation Report List Screen**

The Issuance Reconciliation Report list screen allows you to edit an existing entry, using the **Edit** link beside the entry, or create a new entry using the **New** link.

➢ **Click** the **New** link or the **Edit** link

In either case, the issuance reconciliation detail forms is displayed, as illustrated in Figure 72 on the next page.



**Figure 72: Issuance Reconciliation Report Detail Screen**

When entering a new form, you must choose the Benefit Type, Report Type and Issuance System that you wish to report on.  If editing an existing form, these values will be preset and will not allow you to change them. The Benefit Type is either FSP or DFSP.  If there is no DFSP, there is no need to create a blank form and enter zeros.  If only FSP exists, only create entries for FSP.  This holds true for the Issuance System as well.  When entering data, you must specify the issuance system that the data applies to.  If you have multiple issuance systems, you will need to create multiple versions of this form. Valid issuance systems are as follows:

- **Auth Doc**: Stands for Authorization Document.  Any system using an authorization document or list that must be signed by the household.  Examples of this type of system include ATP issuance systems and regular mail issuance systems, where the intermediary signature document is the primary instrument that determines, for the issuer, whether the household is authorized for benefits and for what amount.

  Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Auth Doc." column.  The other columns ("Dir Access", "Dir Mail" and "Other") will not permit entry when "Auth Doc" is selected.

- **Dir Access**: Stands for Direct Access. Any system in which benefits are issued directly to the household and an issuance agent is able to directly access the Master or Record-for-Issuance Files to record the issuance.  Examples of this system are on-line automated issuance systems and manual Household Issuance Record (HIR) Systems.  The instrument (HIR card or automated file) that indicates to the issuer whether and for how much an individual is authorized is the source file itself.

  Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Dir. Access" column.  The other columns ("Auth Doc", "Dir Mail" and "Other") will not permit entry when "Dir Access" is selected.

- **Dir Mail**: Stands for Direct Mail. Any system in which coupons are directly delivered through the mail to households. No authorization document is used.  (Note: Systems that send checks rather than coupons are not direct mail systems and belong under one of the issuance systems that report under the "Other" column).

  Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Dir. Mail" column.  The other columns ("Auth Doc", "Dir Access", and "Other") will not permit entry when "Dir Mail" is selected.

- **EBT**: Stands for Electronic Benefit Transfer and is the default selection when entering this screen.  This is where the majority of the funds will be entered and applies to all benefits provided via the Golden State Advantage EBT card.  Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Other" column. The "Auth Doc", "Dir Access", and "Dir Mail" columns will not permit entry when "EBT" is selected.

- **DDI**: Stands for Direct Delivery Issuance. It is the direct issuance of counted and packaged coupons to recipients by a contract issuance agent or a

government agency other than the normal issuance/certification county agency office. No authorization document is involved nor is a direct access to the Master or Record-for-Issuance File involved.

Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Other" column. The "Auth Doc", "Dir Access", and "Dir Mail" columns will not permit entry when "DDI" is selected.

- **OTC**: Stands for Over-the-Counter. It is the direct issuance of coupons by a county agency office. No authorization document is involved nor is direct access to the Master or Record-for-Issuance File involved. These coupons can be counted and packaged or taken from inventory.

  Values for this issuance system will be entered under the "Other" column. The "Auth Doc", "Dir Access", and "Dir Mail" columns will not permit entry when "OTC" is selected.

Eventually, if not immediately for many counties, only the EBT issuance will need to be entered as the other issuance methods will no longer apply.  However, since the screen follows the federal form format the EBT entry will remain under the "other" column until, and if, the FNS 46 changes.

The Report Type selection designates which form is being entered as follows:

- **885A**: This is the DFA 885A Federal Issuance Reconciliation Report.  It is the monthly county report of Federal issuance data to be included in the FNS 46 report.

- **885B**: This is the DFA 885B State Option Issuance Reconciliation Report.  It is the monthly county report of State Option (i.e., CFAP) issuance data that is not included on the FNS 46 report

- **885C**: This is the DFA 885C Total Issuance Reconciliation Report.  It is the monthly county report of Federal and State Option issuance data.

- **FNS46**: This is the FNS 46 Issuance Reconciliation Report and is only available to state level users.  County users enter all their information on the DFA 885 series of forms. The FNS 46 is the monthly report of food stamp issuance and returns.  This report also captures statewide Federal over-issuance liabilities for the month.

Counties must enter detailed financial information for the 885A and 885B.  The form 885C derives its numbers from the 885A and 885B, so entry on the 885C is limited to informational and certification fields.  Each field on these forms is uniquely numbered as per the federal form and this number is referred to as the form's line number.

The FNS 46 is similar to the 885C in that it derives its financial information.  The FNS 46 is only used by the state and sums up the financial detail recorded on each of the county's DFA 885A's.  In addition to the FNS 46, the state can also view the sum of the 885A's, 885B's or 885C's by selecting them from the report type dropdown list.  The state's version of each of these reports is the sum of the county versions.  The difference between the sum of the 885A's and the FNS 46 is that the FNS 46 includes investigator totals (fraud amounts).

Since each of these forms has the same format, only one screen is required within SARS to facilitate the capture of the different reporting data. The dropdown lists provided at the top of the screen, i.e., Benefit Type, Report Type and Issuance System, designate the different versions of this form.  As a county user, you must fill out one copy of this form for each Benefit Type / Report Type / Issuance System combination supported within your county. Each form must be filled out in its entirety and then certified (refer to the certification topic later in this section for more detail).

The Issuance Reconciliation Report form can be described as a form header (lines 1 through 5), a form body (the financial information comprising lines 6 through 23) and a form conclusion (remarks, investigator card data and certification information).

## Form Header

The header section is comprised of lines 1 through 5 as follows:

- **Line 1 – Name and Address of Reconciliation Point**: Enter the name and address of the reconciliation reporting point where this report is being prepared. This is preset with the county name for county users or "State of California" for state users.  It is suggested that county users enter more detailed information so that the state can determine whom to contact in case additional information is required.  The state will enter the proper DSS name and address for the FNS 46. This field is enterable on all county and state versions of these forms.

- **Line 2 – Type of Report:** This field is preset by the system. If this is the first version of this report for the month, the Initial checkbox will be checked and the revision number will be zero.  If this form has been previously certified for this month and now changes are being done, the initial checkbox will be unchecked and the applicable revision number will be preset (Refer to the Form Conclusion write-up later in this section for additional information on certification). The Final Report box is not applicable and therefore always unchecked.  The month and year will be set by the system to the month and year that this report is being created for, as defined through the SARS navigation bar via the Issuance Reconciliation Report List Screen.

- **Line 3 – Project Code for Reconciliation Point**: This field is preset by the system to "06-117-01" and cannot be changed.

- **Line 4 – Consolidated Reconciliation Report**: This is preset by the system. It identifies the number of project areas and issuance points covered by the report. For counties it is always set to "1".  For the state version of these reports and the FNS 46, it is set to the number of counties that have provided certified copies of their reports (Refer to the Form Conclusion write-up later in this section for additional information on certification).

- **Line 5** – **Issuance Systems Used**: This is preset to the appropriate financial data being entered, as defined by the Report Type dropdown box. Only the column values under the checked entry will be enterable.  Refer to the section on valid issuance systems earlier in this section for additional detail.

## Form Body

The body of the form has three sections to it, as follows:

- **Section One – Federal Obligations**: This is comprised of lines 6 through 9. Lines 6, 7 and 8 address the establishment of most of the Federal obligations for Food Stamp program benefits.  Line 9 is also a Federal obligation of allowable replacements.  Detail on each of these lines is as follows:

    - **Line 6 – Total Issuance This Month**: This is the total value of all food stamp benefits issued to households during the month. Depending on the form being viewed, this field may be called "Total Federal issuance this month" (form 885A and FNS 46), "Total state issuance this month" (form 885B) or "Total issuance this month (form 885C).  The county must enter it on both the 885A and 885B.  They will need to determine how much issuance was federal versus state and separate these values out on the 885A and 885B. The form 885C derives its value automatically and does not permit changes.  The 885C uses one of two ways to determine its entry.  For EBT benefits, it derives it from the SARS level 3A monthly display.  For non-EBT reporting, it calculates it by adding the 885A and 885B values. It should be noted that although the 885C obtains the EBT values form the SARS Level 3A screen, it will ensure that these numbers match the sum of the 885A and 885B. This is done when the county attempts to certify the 885C for EBT issuance.  Certification will only be permitted if the numbers match otherwise an error will be displayed indicating this mismatch condition. This error is displayed at the top of the screen just under the navigation bar and reads "The monthly federal issuance data (885-A) and the monthly CFAP issuance data (885-B) must sum to the total issuance data (885-C) in order to certify the report."

    - **Line 7 – Returns During Current Month**: This is the total value of deobligations, i.e., benefits that were reported as issued in an earlier reporting period but were returned. Depending on the form being viewed, this field may be called "Federal returns during current month" (form 885A and FNS 46), "State returns during current month" (form 885B) or "Returns during current month (form 885C).  The county must enter it on both the 885A and 885B.  They will need to determine how many returns were federal versus state and separate these values out on the 885A and 885B. The form 885C derives its value automatically and does not permit changes.  The 885C uses one of two ways to determine its entry.  For EBT benefits, it derives it from the SARS level 3A monthly display.  For non-EBT reporting, it calculates it by adding the 885A and 885B values. It should be noted that although the 885C obtains the EBT values form the SARS Level 3A screen, it will ensure that these numbers match the sum of the 885A and 885B. This is done when the county attempts to certify the 885C for EBT issuance. Certification will only be permitted if the numbers match otherwise an error will be displayed indicating this mismatch condition. This error is displayed at the top of the screen just under the navigation bar and reads "The monthly federal issuance data (885-A) and the monthly CFAP issuance data (885-B) must sum to the total issuance data (885-

C) in order to certify the report."

- o **Line 8 – Net Issuance**: This value is automatically populated based on subtracting line 7 from line 6.  It is not modifiable.  This calculation results in a figure that is more accurately described as the net obligation.

- o **Line 9 – Value of Authorized Replacements Transacted**: This is the value of authorized replacements transacted during the report month. The county must enter it on both the 885A and 885B.  The 885C derives its value by summing the values on the 885A and 885B. When entering this value, if it is being entered for replacements issued in the form of documents, enter only the value of the authorized replacements if both the original and the replacement issuance document have been transacted.  This line only reflects the value of the replacement that increases Federal liability.

- **Section Two – State Issuance Liabilities**: This is comprised of lines 10 through 21.  It addresses the reconciliation and determination of state issuance liabilities. The county must enter each of the appropriate financial values on both the 885A and 885B.  The 885C derives its value by summing the values on the 885A and 885B so these values are not enterable on the 885C.  These values are not enterable on the FNS 46 either as the FNS 46 derives it values from summing up the county 885A's.  For specific information on each financial line identified on this form, refer to the FNS-46 and DFA 885 Issuance Reconciliation Report Instructions provide by the County Fiscal Letter (CFL) No. 02/03-18 date September 23, 2002.  You may obtain a copy of this letter from the website www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb using the "CDSS Letters and Notices" button:

Alternatively, you may go directly to the letter using the following link:

www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/cfl02/pdf/02-03_18.pdf

- **Section Three – Totals**: This is comprised of line 22 (Total Over-Issuance) and line 23 (Total Valid Federal Issuance).  This section's values are computed and therefore not enterable. Line 22 sums the values in section two, i.e., lines 10 through 21.  Line 23 is computed as line 8 (Net Issuance) minus line 22 (Total Over-Issuance).

## Form Conclusion

The conclusion section of the form is comprised of the following:

- **Remarks**: This is defined as line 24 on the form.  It is enterable on all versions of the DFA and FNS forms.  It is a free form area to provide clarification for any items that the reviewer should be aware of when viewing the data supplied. It is an optional field.

- **Investigator Cards**: This section is only applicable to the FNS 46 report. It is the value of EBT benefits issued to county, state and federal investigators for

trafficking investigations which were included in the EBT total issuance figure report on line 6 (Total issuance this month). The totals on line 6 are the sum of the county 885A's plus these numbers.  The amounts entered must specify the amount issued and the amount repayed.
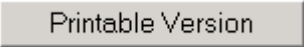
- **Certification**: This section is used to certify that the data entered on the form is complete and accurate.  For the form 885's, it certifies that the state can merge this data into the FNS 46.  A form becomes certified when a date is entered in the Certified Date field and the Certified Ind checkbox is checked. Once certified, a form's data becomes permanent.  Any changes to the form result in a new revision being created.  This is especially important on the 885 series of forms since once a form is certified, the state includes its values in the FNS 46.  Any changes must be tracked as new revisions so the state has the option of creating new versions of the FNS 46, if necessary. Revision numbers are indicated on line 2, Type of Report, and automatically established by the system when a certified form gets modified.  The Issuance Reconciliation Report List Screen also identifies the revision of each form so that previous revisions can be viewed. The system also allows any revision to be used as the basis for a new version, however, typically, the latest revision should be used to build a new version.

  The 885 series of forms cannot be certified unless the 885C equals the sum of the 885A and 885B.  Normally this will not be a problem since for most of the fields, summing the corresponding 885A and 885B fields derive the 885C. However, for EBT reporting, line 6 (Total Issuance This Month) and line 7 (Returns During Current Month) are derived from the SARS level 3A report. The 885A and 885B values must sum up to these totals.

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**Important**: Once a county has completed the form 885A, 885B and 885C, they must certify the form by entering the certification date and checking the certification checkbox, otherwise the state will be unable to merge this data into the FNS 46.

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After all data has been entered for a given form, you must select the [ Save ] button to record the information.  The [ Clear ] button is used to reset the fields back to their original display, as they were upon entry into this form.  This button is useful if you feel you accidentally overtyped a field and want to recover the form to the state it was when you first selected it for editing. The [ Delete ] button is available when editing an uncertified form. It allows you to remove it from the system. The most common use of the delete button will be to remove an unwanted revision.  The [ Printable Version ] button is used to display the form in a format that matches the paper versions of these forms, as defined by County Fiscal Letter (CFL) No. 02/03-18.  This printable version can then be printed to any printer accessible to your workstation. The printable version is primarily a convenience and does not imply that the counties should print the 885's and mail them to the state. Once the county enters and certifies the data, the state will be given electronic access to pull this information into the FNS 46. The paper version is not required.

# 5.    NON-RECONCILIATION REPORTS

## 5.1    VIEWING CEFS REPORTS

All daily and monthly reports that are included in the CEFS Reports Catalogue are available to SARS users. This is the same set of reports provided by the CEFS on-line inquiry, except that the CEFS on-line reports site is available to users for fourteen days, while the SARS system provides these reports on-line for an indefinite time period[4].

To view the reports you must select the EBT System Reports option from the main menu to display the CEFS Reports menu illustrated in Figure 73.

> ➢ **Select** the **EBT System Reports** menu option
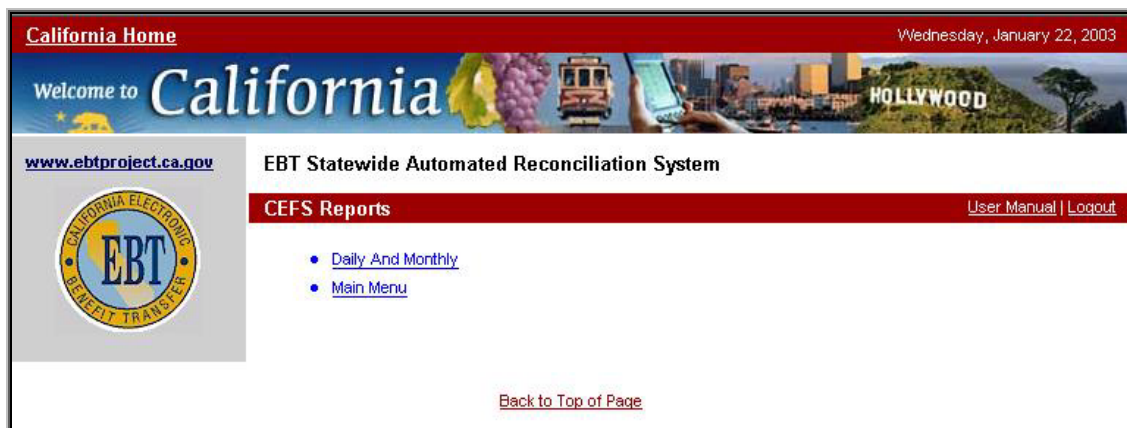


**Figure 73: CEFS Reports Main Menu**

There is only one CEFS report menu item currently provided on this submenu, the Daily and Monthly Reports item.  Selection of this item will take you to the CEFS Reports Audit screen, as illustrated in Figure 74 on the next page.

> ➢ **Click** the **Daily and Monthly** menu option

This window is called the CEFS Reports Audit because it not only lists the reports that were received, and viewable by you, but it also lists the reports that should/could have been received and were not.  This list is based on the CEFS Reports Catalogue, version 4.

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[4] No purge criteria has been defined to date. Eventually, storage may become an issue and purge criteria will need to be identified. Until that time, SARS does not purge any of these reports.

**Figure 74: Daily CEFS Reports List**

When this screen displays, you are presented with the daily reports for the date identified in the navigation bar. Reports fall into one of three categories, Financial, Operational, and Fraud. Not all users have access to the Fraud Reports. In this case, this section will not be listed.

Reports that have been received and are therefore viewable have three ☐ buttons to their right. One that allows you to view the report, one that allows you to download the text version of the report and one that allows you to download a CSV version of the report. Those that have not been received, have a "**Not Received**" notification to their right in place of each of the three buttons[5].

To select a particular report for viewing, you need to click on the View button corresponding to the report you wish to view. When you do this you are presented with a copy of the report showing only your county's data. If you are a state user, and have "State of California" selected, you will see the full statewide report. An

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[5] The report identified as not received in Figure 72, 10 Day Conversion Report, is only received for a short period after a county goes live. Normally this report will be marked as "Not Received".

example of performing this action on the Adjustment Audit Report (first report on the list of Figure 72) for Alameda County is illustrated in Figure 75.

> ➤ **Click** the **View** link on the Adjustment Audit Report



**Figure 75: Example of Adjustment Audit Report**

Reports provided through this interface are presented in the exact same text format in which they were received from CEFS. Since CEFS only produces a statewide version of this report, the text version presented at the county level is a "filtered" version of the statewide report, only displaying data applicable to your county. This filtering results in gaps in page numbers since the report is only displaying data applicable to you in its original report format and content. For example, if your county only has data on pages 15 and 35, you will only see pages 15 and 35, and only the data on these pages which is applicable to you.

In addition to viewing a report, you can download a copy of it in the exact same format as you are viewing it. By selecting to Download Text you will get a text copy of the report such that it can be imported into any text editor or word processor. When downloading data, you are always given the option to save the data to disk or to open it in the default application. Since the text file comes with the extension ".txt", a typical Microsoft Windows environment will launch Notepad and load the download to it, should you select to open the file. This is a handy approach to bring a copy of the report down in its own separate window. By opening the file, a new copy of notepad is launched and the file is loaded to it. You are then able to go onto other SARS task and still maintain a copy of the report in a separate window.

Another handy feature of downloading a text version of the file is that you can load this text version into a more powerful word processing application such as Microsoft Word. The advantage of this is that you can apply more elaborate formatting to the report such as page separation and heading bolding for local printing and

management presentation.

To download a CEFS Report you click the ▭ button to the right of the report under the column heading "Download Text"

> ➢ **Click** the ▭ button to the right of the report under the column heading "Download Text"

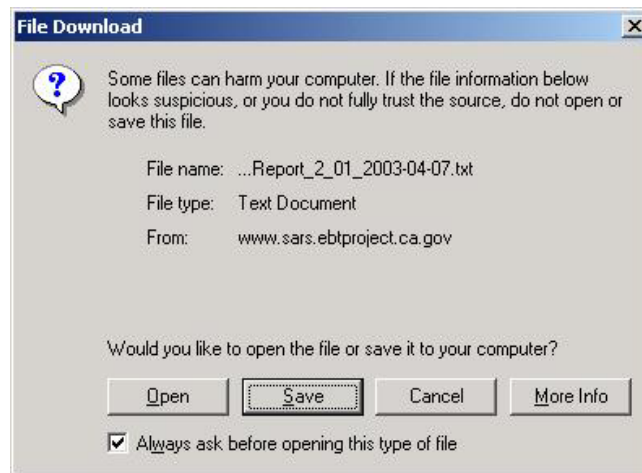Upon clicking this button, a window similar to that illustrated in Figure 76 will be displayed.
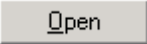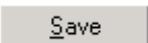


**Figure 76: CEFS Reports Download Confirmation**

This window requests you to confirm the download request. If you click the ⎡ Open ⎤ button, the file will be downloaded and placed in the application that is associated with ".txt" files. For windows, this results in Notepad being opened with this file. If you click the ⎡ Save ⎤ button, you will be asked where to store the file on your workstation for later access. The ⎡ Cancel ⎤ button terminates the download request.

The other download option provided on the CEFS Reports Audit screen is to download the file in CSV format. The CSV (Comma delimited) file format saves only the text and values as they are displayed in the cells of the report. A cell of a report is the value associated with one line/column entry. Only detail lines of the report are stored with each detail recorded as a separate line in the CSV file. Columns of data within each detail line are separated by commas and enclosed in double quotation marks. The first line, and in some case the second line, of the CSV stores the column headings.

CSV files can be imported directly into spreadsheet applications such as Microsoft Excel. Each line in the CSV is treated as a row in the spreadsheet, with each cell being placed in a separate column. The main purpose of the CSV is to facilitate the importing of the report data into a spreadsheet application so that the data can be

sorted and totaled differently than currently provided by the report.

To download a CEFS Report CSV you click the ▢ button to the right of the report under the column heading "Download CSV"

> ➢ **Click** the ▢ button to the right of the report under the column heading "Download CSV"

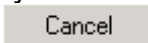Upon clicking this button, a window similar to that illustrated in Figure 76 on the previous page will be displayed. This window functions the same as described earlier for downloaded a text version of the report. The only difference is that the file being saved will have a default name that includes the suffix "_csv" on the name, just prior to the ".txt" suffix.

Once a CSV has been saved locally on your workstation, you can open the file using an application such as Microsoft Excel. When Excel attempts to open the file, it will recognize that it is a text file by the ".txt" file name extension. It will then present you with the text import wizard dialog box. Under the statement "Choose the file type that best describes your data", select the Delimited radio button and click the next button. The Excel text import wizard will present you with the second of three dialog boxes. Uncheck the "Tab" delimiter and check the "Comma" delimiter checkbox. Click the Next button. On the third and final dialog box, set the column data formats such that they properly represent the data. Alternatively, you can let Excel default all column value formats for you. The only issue with doing this is that some columns, such as the Benefit Authorization number, will default to a number field when reality they should be a text field. However, even as a number field, their formats can be modified after the fact so that they display correctly within the spreadsheet.

Besides daily reports, you can also view monthly reports. To switch from daily to monthly, you need to switch the day/month field on the Navigation Bar to Month, as illustrated in Figure 75.



**Figure 77: CEFS Monthly Reports Selection**

You will also want to set the date field to the month you wish to view. This usually requires you to move the month back one using the Prev button since the no month-end reports would have been received for the current month yet. The month-end reports are actually received over a period of time such as the first week at the beginning of the next month. Therefore, if viewing the reports on the first or second of the month, you will likely see a lot of the as "Not Received" as SARS is still waiting

for them from CEFS.  Once received, this display is updated to reflect the current receipts.

Figure 78 illustrates the monthly report display for the navigation bar setting in Figure 77. As with the daily reports, the Fraud Reports section is only listed if you have security rights to view these reports.



**Figure 78: CEFS Monthly Reports List**

## 5.2   CLAIM ACTIVITY REPORT

Each day, CEFS receives claims from merchants that request that a clients EBT account be debited with a transaction because the transaction did not go through electronically but the transaction, e.g., purchase, actually occurred. When this

happens, CEFS must produce a list of these transactions for each county to be verified. The county is responsible for sending a notice to the client indicating that their account will be debited for the specified amount unless they hear otherwise from the client. CEFS notifies a county of these transactions through a Claim Activity file that they send to SARS each day, one per county. SARS receives these files and loads them to the system making them viewable to the county users each day. This is a non-reconciliation report and therefore is provided by a special option off of the main menu, Miscellaneous Reports.

> ➢ **Select** the **Miscellaneous Reports** menu option

If a user selects Miscellaneous Reports, they are presented with the menu shown in Figure 77.



**Figure 79: Miscellaneous Reports Menu**

For this menu, the user would select the Claim Activity option.

> ➢ **Select** the **Claim Activity** menu option
> ➢ **Wait** for the Claim Activity screen to display
> ➢ **Click** on the Go! button to populate the Claim Activity display.

Figure 80 on the next page illustrates the claim activity report.

**Figure 80: Claim Activity Report**

## 5.3 MONTHLY STATISTICS

SARS provides a set of monthly statistics by county and state used primarily for the audit of Citicorp billing. These statistics currently include the following:

- ➢ Active Food Stamps Only Cases: The count of cases that received a food stamp issuance during the month and not a cash issuance for that same month.

- ➢ Active Cash Only Cases: The count of cases that received a cash issuance during the month and not a food stamp issuance for that same month.

- ➢ Active Combined FS And Cash Cases: The count of cases that received both a Food Stamp and cash issuance during the month.

- ➢ Coupon Conversions: This is the number of successful Coupon Conversion transactions for a given month.

- ➢ State Paid ATM Cash Transactions: This is the number of successful Cash ATM transactions per client, not to exceed four per client, that are performed for a given month. The first four ATM or POS transactions are not charged to the client, which means the state must pay these fees. SARS therefore counts and tracks these chargeable transactions.

- ➢ Client Calls to ARU: This is the number of client calls to the Citicorp Automated Response Unit (ARU) for a given month.

The Monthly Statistics screen is a non-reconciliation report and therefore is provided by through the Miscellaneous Reports menu option.

- ➢ **Select** the **Miscellaneous Reports** menu option

If a user selects Miscellaneous Reports, they are presented with the menu shown in Figure 81.



**Figure 81: Miscellaneous Reports Menu**

For this menu, the user would select the Monthly Statistics Report option.

&#10138; **Select** the **Monthly Statistics** menu option

&#10138; **Wait** for the Monthly Statistics screen to display

&#10138; **Click** on the ⌞Go!⌟ button to populate the Monthly Statistics display.

Figure 82 illustrates the Monthly Statistics Report screen.



**Figure 82: Monthly Statistics Report**

# 6.    SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

SARS allows certain authorized users to perform specific system administration functions via the SARS online, browser based interface. These functions include the following:

> **SARS Users**: Allows administrators to add new users to the system, removed users from the system or modify existing users, e.g., name, access rights or password.

> **Batch Process**: Allows a System Administrator to run batch or delete a batch. A batch is a complete set of files received for a given day from CEFS. Running batch imports the files and recalculates all the reports, including variances for the day. This function is rarely used since batch automatically executes each night, without operator intervention. This function only exists for handling unexpected situations.

> **Reconciliation Activity Log**: Provides a detailed list of all activity, by county and user id, which has occurred on the system for a given day.

To perform administrative functions, you must have been defined as an administrator. There are two types of administrators, a System Administrator and a County Administrator. A System Administrator has the capability of performing all functions identified above and is only applicable to users with State Level Access. A County Administrator may Maintain User Ids, Select County Options and Select Reconciliation Items Activity Types. County Administrators are restricted to performing administration within their own county, e.g., they can only add users to their county.

To access administrative functions, you need to select the System Administration option from the main menu.

> **Select** the **System Administration** menu option

This results in the display of the System Administration menu, as illustrated in Figure 83 on the next page.
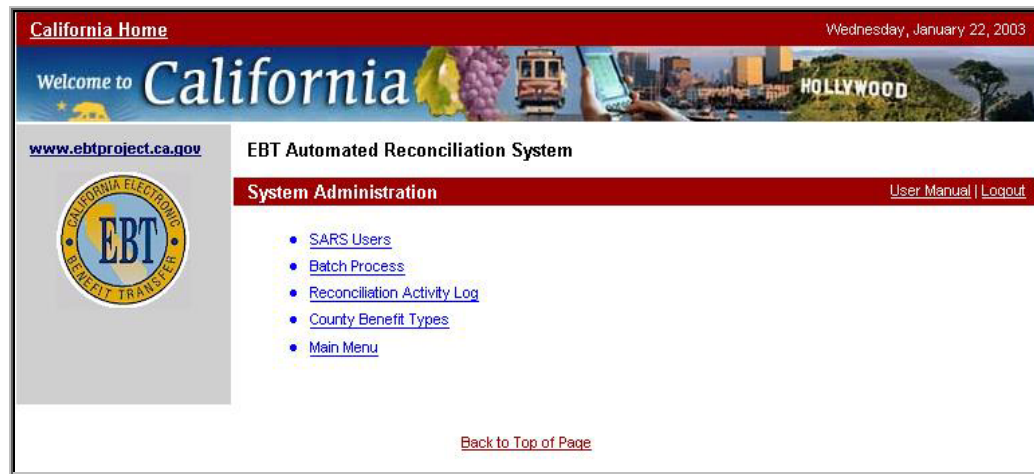
**Figure 83: System Administration Menu**

From this menu, you can select to go to any of the options listed, assuming you have the necessary access rights.

## 6.1    SARS Users

To maintain users within SARS, you must use the SARS Sys users option on the System Administration menu.

> ➢  **Select** the **SARS Users** menu option

Selection of this option displays the screen illustrated in Figure 84.
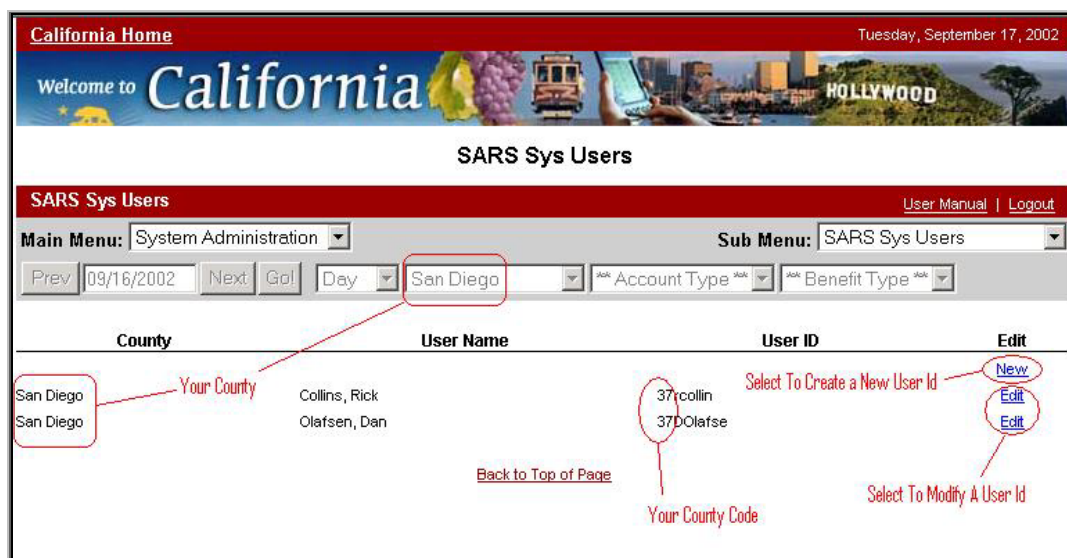


**Figure 84: System User List Screen**

If you are a county system administrator, you have the rights to add users to SARS for your county. If you are a system administrator, you have the rights to add users for the state or on behalf of any county.  Regardless of your administrative authority level, the screens and procedures are the same.  The only difference is as a System Administrator you see all user ids in the system and you can specify the county you want to add a user to.

The screen shown in Figure 82 lists all the users currently defined to your county (or to the state if you are a system administrator). It includes the Users Name and the User ID for each defined user.

To create a new user, you must click on the **New** link under the column **Edit**.  To modify an existing user, select the **Edit** link aligned with that user.

> ➢ **Click** on the **New** link to add a user or the **Edit** link to modify one

Whether you select the **New** link or the **Edit** link from the Sys Users list, you will be presented with a screen similar to that shown in Figure 85.



**Figure 85: System User Screen (County Administrator)**

This screen will differ slightly if you are a county administrator or a System Administrator.  County administrators cannot change the county displayed whereas System Administrators can.  Additionally, System Administrators have three more

roles that they can assign to a user, as illustrated in Figure 86.



**Figure 86: System User Screen (System Administrator)**

Assuming that you entered the screen pictured in Figure 86 via the **New** link, the initial display of this window will have no entries in the First Name, Last Name or Password fields. Additionally, none of the role checkboxes will be checked. The User Id field will also be blank and will always be blank when creating new users. This field cannot be modified since it is generated by the system, according to the EBT project's user id rules**[6]**. It is displayed only when modifying a user, i.e., when the user id is already known.

To create a user, simply type in the user's First Name, Last Name and provide them with a password. Make sure that they change their password to something you do not know after you assign it to them. If they forget their password, you can always reset it to a new value, however, you can never use this screen to determine what a user's password was.

Because the system generates the user id for you, based on the user's name, it is possible that two users with very similar names could get the same user id. The system prevents this from occurring by presenting the error "User ID already exists

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**[6]** The EBT project user id rules require that the user id be a maximum of nine characters with the first two characters being the county id ("00" for state users), the next character being the first initial of the user's first name and the remaining six characters (or less) being the first six characters of the last name.

<span style="color:red">for another user</span>" when the attempt is made to add the second user.  In this unlikely event, you will need to append the user's middle initial to the beginning of their last name to ensure that the generated user id is unique.

Before recording this user in the system, make sure you identify what type of user this is using the role checkboxes.  The various roles are as follows:

- **AMA User**: a state level user that is required to enter the AMA drawdown information each day (refer to section 4.3, State FNS Financial System Data)

- **CEFS Fraud Reports**: A county or state user that can view the fraud specific reports received from CEFS on a daily basis (refer to section 5.1, Viewing CEFS Reports)

- **Claim Activity**: A county or state user that can view the claim activity report (refer to section 5.2, Claim Activity Report)

- **County User**: A standard county user that can view the standard reconciliation reports.

- **County Admin**: A county user with the rights to add, delete and modify users within their county.

- **County Data Entry**: A county user with the rights to perform bank data entry or entry of adjustments.

- **Monthly Statistics**: A county or state user that can view the monthly statistics report (refer to section 5.3, Monthly Statistics)

- **State User**: A state level user that can view the standard reconciliation reports.

- **System Admin**: A user with full access rights to all functions, including the ability to add, delete and modify users within the state or in any county.

After all data entry is complete, click the `Save` button.  This adds the user to the database but does not make them active.  To activate the user, you must click the `Done` button so that the online security system is refreshed.  When doing so, you will be exited from this window.  If you are adding multiple users, add them using the `Save` button so that you remain in this window.  Only click `Done` when you are truly done and ready to leave.  Note that refreshing the security information is global to all of SARS so even if you do not reset it, the next time anyone resets it, your changes will become effective.

The steps to add the user are therefore as follows:

- ➢ **Enter** the user's first name
- ➢ **Enter** the user's last name
- ➢ **Enter** a password for the user
- ➢ **Check** the roles appropriate for this user

> ➢ **Click** the Save button

> ➢ **Click** the Done button after all user changes are complete.

After clicking the Done button, you are again presented with the list of users currently defined (refer to Figure 84), only now, the new users you added will be included.

## 6.2 BATCH PROCESS

The Maintain Daily Batch function allows a user to run a batch or delete a batch. A batch is a complete set of files received for a given day from CEFS. Running a batch imports the files and recalculates all the reports, including variances for the day. This function is rarely used since batch automatically executes each night, without operator intervention. This function only exists for handling unexpected situations

To access the Batch function, you must select the SARS Batch Process from the System Administration menu.

> ➢ **Select** the **Batch Process** menu option

This results in the display of the Launch Batch Process window, illustrated in Figure 87.
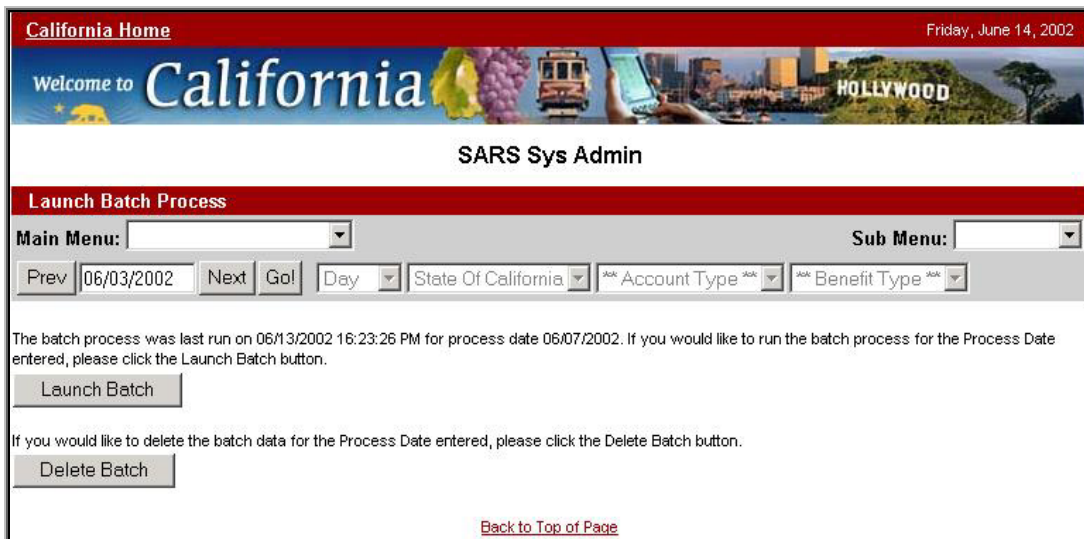


**Figure 87: Batch Process Screen**

This screen details when the batch process was last run. From this screen you may run batch manually (in the event the automated process malfunctioned or you did

not receive the required files).

> ➢ **Click** the [ Launch Batch ] button

While the batch process is running this button will become disabled and will not allow selection. Upon completion of the batch process an updated date and time (date of process) will be displayed, however, this screen update is not automatic. You must leave and reenter the screen, or refresh it using your browsers refresh key.

If the automated batch or manual batch process was run and the wrong files or data was imported into the data erroneously you can back out the data by deleting the entire batch for that process date and re-run batch manually once the correct data is obtained. To delete a batch:

> ➢ **Click** the [ Delete Batch ] button

Much like the batch process, the delete batch process, once launched, will disable the Delete Batch button, making it unselectable. Upon completion of the delete batch process the delete batch button will be made available for use, after you have refreshed this screen.

## 6.3   RECONCILIATION ACTIVITY LOG

SARS provides an Activity log that allows authorized uses to monitor the use of the SARS application. To access the activity log, you must select the SARS Reconciliation Activity Log option from the System Administration menu.

> ➢ **Select** the **Reconciliation Activity Log** menu option

This results in the display of the Reconciliation Activity Log window, illustrated in Figure 88 on the next page.

Information presented in this window is ordered chronologically showing the most recent activity at the top of the screen, oldest at the bottom.  The activity performed is limited to the screen access, not the function that was performed on the screen. The Process Date is the date that was listed in the navigation bar when the screen was used.

The primary use of this function is to assist the SARS Help Desk to determine actions that were taken when a problem or unexpected event occurs.

**Figure 88: Reconciliation Activity Log**

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A -  ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| Batch | A group of jobs (as programs) which are submitted for processing on a computer and whose results are obtained at a later time |
| CDSS | California Department of Social Services. The sponsoring agency for the EBT project. |
| CEFS | Citicorp Electronic Funds Services. The contractor selected to provide EBT services in California. |
| EBT | Electronic Benefit Transfer. Technology and services that support the issuing and redeeming of social service program benefits electronically. |
| EBT System | The CEFS processing software and systems that house client EBT account information. |
| Eligibility System | The software and system used by counties to determine client eligibility, issue benefits, and provide program financial management. |
| HHSDC | Health and Human Services Data Center. The department tasked with the management and oversight of the California EBT project. |
| HTTPS | Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure. This is a browser based security format that utilized secure socket layers with the Hyper Text Transfer Protocol. |
| SARS | Statewide Automated Reconciliation System. The proposed solution to assist counties and the State to reconcile County benefit issuance, redemptions, and obligations in a standardized user-friendly manner. |
| USDA-FNS | United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services. The federal entity responsible for the management of the Food Stamp Program. |

# Appendix B - RECONCILIATION REPORTS DATA SOURCES

This Appendix provides snapshots of the key Reconciliation Reports and where the data that populates each line item on these reports originates. It is intended to assist you in understanding the contents of the reports and will assist you with any manual tests that you may want to perform to ensure that SARS is processing data correctly.

The first thing to understand about the SARS Reconciliation Reports is the files and reports from both CEFS and the counties that are used to populate SARS. These files and reports are as follows:

➢ **Benefit Authorization (Issuance) File**: The benefit authorization file includes all of the batch issuance from your county's eligibility system. There are separate Food Stamp and Cash benefit authorization files sent by each county to CEFS. SARS receives these files from CEFS as they are sent by the counties (unprocessed). These records match up to the 201 transactions in the CEFS Account Activity file (issuances and voids).

➢ **Benefit Return File**:  Once CEFS receives the benefit authorization file it processes the file and sends to SARS a return file. The return file identifies any rejected records or if the whole file was rejected. Every benefit authorization file should have a corresponding benefit return file, as identified by the matching control number.

➢ **Unlinked Benefit File**: This file includes any benefits that were authorized, but could not be linked to a demographic record held by CEFS. These files often contain the same records from one day to the next and after 90 days if not linked to demographics, they will be deleted (action code of 02). However, they are simply dropped from the file if they are resolved.

➢ **Benefit Draw Report**: This report includes the benefit draw down information according to CEFS. The report breaks the information out by benefit type within account type within county code. SARS compares the county summarized issuances to this CEFS benefit draw report to detect variances between CEFS and the county.

➢ **Administrative Actions Report**: This report captures the voids issued through the Administrative Terminal or host-to-host transaction.

➢ **Account Activity File**: This file itemizes every single transaction that occurs against the EBT accounts maintained by CEFS.  SARS uses this file to ensure issuances were properly posted and redemptions properly recorded. Refer to Appendix D for a list of the transaction types itemized within this file.

## Issuance Reconciliation (Level 3A) Report

This report receives all of its data from the files and reports that are processed by SARS. This is the main SARS report that feeds into other key reconciliation reports.

## Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) Report

The CEFS Benefit Draw Report and data that is key entered by the counties populate this report. Specifically, cash benefits redeemed is compared to the key-entered county bank draw down data.

Remaining Obligation Reconciliation (Level 3C) Report

This report is very similar to the Level 2 report below, with the exception that the data is displayed by Benefit Type. The report is populated by the Level 3A report and the Benefit Draw Report data.

## Benefit Type Reconciliation (Level 2) Report

This report is populated with data from the Level 3A report and compares that data to the CEFS Benefit Draw Report.

## Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report

This report is populated with summarized data from the Level 2 report. Essentially, it sums up and displays all of the Level 2 report information to the Account Level (Food Stamps, Cash).

## Appendix C - BENEFIT TYPES TABLE

The table below includes all of the Benefit Types for both the Food Stamps and the Cash Grant/Account Type levels, along with the CDS Aid Codes.

| Benefit Type | Description | CDS Aid Codes |
|---|---|---|
| **Food Stamps** | | |
| FSP | Fed/State Food Stamps | |
| DFSP | Disaster Food Stamps | |
| **Cash** | | |
| RCA | Refugee Cash Assistance | 01, 0A |
| ECA | Entrant Cash Assistance | 08 |
| TANF | CalWORKs - All Families | 30 |
| ZERO | CalWORKs - Zero Parent | 33 |
| EXMPT | CalWORKs - All Families-Exempt | 3P |
| ZEMPT | CalWORKs - Zero Parent Exempt | 3R |
| LIMG | CalWORKs - Legal Immigrant (All Families Mixed Cases) | 3E |
| ZMLIMG | CalWORKs - Legal Immigrant (Zero Parent Mixed Cases) | 3H |
| TOTANF | CalWORKs - TANF Time Out | 32 |
| CWTWO | CalWORKs - State Only 2 Parent Families | 35 |
| CWALL | CalWORKs - Legal Immigrants-All Families | 3L |
| CWZERO | CalWORKs - Zero Parent | 3G |
| CWLI2 | CalWORKs - Legal Immigrant Two Parent Families | 3M |
| CWMX | CalWORKs - Legal Immigrant Two Parent Mixed | 3U |
| CWLITO | CalWORKs - TANF Timed Out Legal Immigrant Mixed Cases | 3W |
| SAFEAL | Safety Net – All Other Families, CalWORKs Timed-Out, Child-Only Case | 3A |
| SAFETP | Safety Net – Two Parent Families, CalWORKs Timed-Out, Child-Only Case | 3C |
| CAPIQA | Cash Assistance for Immigrants-Qualified Aliens (Before 8/22/96) | 1A |
| CAPINQ | Cash Assistance for Immigrants-Non-Qualified Aliens (On/After 8/22/96) | 6K |
| CAPISA | Cash Assistance for Immigrants-Sponsored Aliens (On/After 8/22/96) | 6M |
| CAIPR | Cash Assistance for Immigrants-Qualified Aliens or PRUCOL (On/After 8/22/96) | 6T |
| GA | GA | 90-99 |
| IASSI | SSI Interim Assistance | 90-99 |
| IACAPI | CAPI Interim Assistance | 90-99 |
| GAWEP | GA Work Expired | 90-99 |

## Appendix D -  TRANSACTION TYPE CODE TABLE

The table below includes the transaction type codes, their names and descriptions. All transaction types are currently loaded and processed by SARS.

| TYPE | NAME | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| 101 | Benefit Add (Admin Terminal) | Authorize benefits from an administrative terminal. |
| 102 | Coupon Conversion (Admin Terminal) | Debit account food stamp balance and issue food coupons. |
| 103 | Account Adjustment (Admin Terminal) | Credit or debit an account balance through an administrative terminal. |
| 104 | Food Stamp Manual Authorization | Debit account based on food stamp Manual Authorization. Hold funds. |
| 105 | Repayment (Admin Terminal) | Debit account based on repayment/recoupment. |
| 201 | Benefit Add (Batch Interface) | Add funds to an account via the batch interface or host-to-host |
| 202 | Coupon Conversion Expungement | Expunge portion of account food stamp balance that could not be directly converted to coupons. Expungement occurs 7 days after conversion. |
| 203 | Food Stamp Expungement | Expunge grant balance. |
| 204 | Food Stamp Manual Authorization Release | Credit client account if merchant does not submit voucher within 15 days. |
| 205 | Cash Expungement | Expunge grant balance. |
| 206 | Card Replacement Fee | |
| 300 | Balance Inquiry | |
| 301 | Food Stamp Purchase | Purchase food with food stamp benefits. |
| 302 | Food Stamp Merchandise Return | Credit account when merchandise is returned. |
| 303 | Cash Withdrawal | Account cash withdrawal (ATM). |
| 304 | Purchase Transaction | Account cash purchase (POS). |
| 305 | Purchase with Cashback | Account cash purchase plus cash back (POS). |
| 306 | Cashback Only | Cashback (POS). |
| 308 | Food Stamp Manual Authorization Debit (Voucher Clear) | Follow up to Manual Authorization. Held funds debited to pay merchant. |
| 309 | Reversal/Cancellation/Void | Reverse or cancel all or part of a transaction from an ATM/POS. |
| 310 | Food Stamp Manual Authorization Credit (Voucher Clear) | Credit account after obtaining manual credit authorization, and clearing voucher through POS. |
| 401 | Benefit Add  (Host-to-Host) | Authorize benefits via Host-to-Host transaction. |
| 402 | Coupon Conversion (Host-to-Host) | Debit account food stamp balance and issue food coupons. |
| 405 | Repayment (Host-to-Host) | Debit account based on repayment/recoupment. |

## Appendix E - SARS SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

| CONTACT INFORMATION | |
|---|---|
| **SARS Help Desk** | **(916) 263-4036** |

| County | Name | Phone | E-mail |
|---|---|---|---|
| State | Cortes, James | (916) 657-3131 | James.Cortes@dss.ca.gov |
| State | Mez, Johnny | (916) 654-1572 | Johnny.Mez@dss.ca.gov |
| Alameda | Abbott, Marcia | (510) 777-2332 | MAbbott@co.alameda.ca.us |
| Alameda | Scruggs, Jo Anne | (510) 777-2350 | JScruggs@co.alameda.ca.us |
| Contra Costa | Brower, Adela | (925) 313-1561 | ABrower@ehsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us |
| Contra Costa | McCoy, Miriam | (925) 313-1637 | MMccoy@ehsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us |
| Contra Costa | Shannon, Teresa | (925) 313-1729 | TShannon@ehsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us |
| Fresno | Jucatan, Richard | (559) 453-6375 | RJucutan@fresno.ca.gov |
| Imperial | Daniel Esparza | (760) 337-6880 | danielesparza@imperialcounty.net |
| Imperial | Mary Ransdell | (760) 337-7403 | maryransdell@imperialcounty.net |
| Kern | | | |
| Los Angeles | Daniel Garcia | (626) 312-6133 | dgarcia@ladpss.org |
| Los Angeles | David Kissinger | (626) 312-6145 | dkissing@ladpss.org |
| Los Angeles | Steven Dang | (626) 312-6146 | sdang@ladpss.org |
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| Marin | Ben Murphy | (415) 473-3568 | bmurphy@co.marin.ca.us |
| Marin | Carlos Gonzalez | (415) 473-3499 | cgonzalez@co.marin.ca.us |
| Marin | Michael Saunders | (415) 473-3493 | MSaunders@co.marin.ca.us |
| Merced | Craig , Kurt | 209 385-3000 ext 5892 | KCraig@hsa.co.merced.ca.us |
| Merced | Dawkins , Michelle | 209 385-3000 ext 5312 | MDawkins@hsa.co.merced.ca.us |
| Napa | Mike McElroy | (707) 253-4598 | mmcelroy@co.napa.ca.us |
| Napa | Lenee Connelly | (707) 253-4644 | lconnell@co.napa.ca.us |
| Orange | Edie, Jim | (714) 541-7828 | Jim.Edie@ssa.ocgov.com |

| County | Name | Phone | E-mail |
|---|---|---|---|
| Orange | Lu, Danny | (714) 245-6226 | Danny.Lu@ssa.ocgov.com |
| Orange | Tahara , Derrick | (714) 541-7824 | Derrick.Tahara@ssa.ocgov.com |
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| Riverside | Rifilato, Mike | (909) 358-3981 | MRifilat@riversidepss.org |
| San Francisco | Rennock, Florencia | (415) 557-5595 | Florencia.Rennock@sfgov.org |
| San Francisco | Ovieda, Maxine | (415) 557-5845 | Maxine.Ovieda@sfgov.org |
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| Santa Clara | Barrow, James | (408) 491-6439 | James.Barrow@ssa.co.santa-clara.ca.us |
| Santa Cruz | Noroyan, Nyla | (831) 454-4074 | hra021@hra.co.santa-cruz.ca.us |
| Santa Cruz | Coulson, Dee Ann | (831) 454-4078 | hra093@hra.co.santa-cruz.ca.us |
| Santa Cruz | Sprague, John | (831) 454-4807 | hra076@hra.co.santa-cruz.ca.us |
| Solano | Greeley, Shirley | (707) 553-5767 | SGreeley@solanocounty.com |
| Solano | Milton, William (Bill) | (707) 553-5177 | BJMilton@SolanoCounty.com |
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| Stanislaus | Ebert, Monica | (209) 558-3314 | EbertM@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us |
| Stanislaus | Smith, Nancy | (209) 558-3521 | SmithN@mail.co.stanislaus.ca.us |
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| Tulare | Petersen , Eric | (559) 737-4660 ext 2513 | epeterse@tularehhsa.org |
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| Ventura | Rabago, Kathy | (805) 652-7860 | Kathy.Rabago@mail.co.ventura.ca.us |
| Ventura | Trone, Andrea | (805) 652-7619 | Andrea.Trone@mail.co.ventura.ca.us |
| Yolo | Loveless, William (Rok) | 530-661-2750 x4095 | william.loveless@yolocounty.org |
| Yolo | Manning, Yvonne | (530) 661-2915 | Yvonne.Manning@yolocounty.org |

# Appendix F -  QUICK EBT RECONCILIATION USING SARS

This appendix is a quick reference on how to use the Statewide Automated Reconciliation System (SARS) to perform daily reconciliation.  It describes a fast approach to verifying that benefits authorized by the county are correctly posted by Citicorp and made available to the client and that any actions regarding these benefits are tracked, itemized and reported correctly.  This appendix is not intended to teach you how to use SARS or the reason, background or procedures for reconciliation.  Refer to the rest of the SARS User Manual for general information on how to access and use SARS and refer to the Settlement and Reconciliation Guide for background and reconciliation procedures information.

The main purpose for using SARS is to ensure that benefits authorized by your county reach the intended recipient. The easiest way to do this is to ensure that the total dollars issued by your county match what Citicorp posted to the clients' accounts each day.  SARS assists you in verifying this by tracking all authorizations you submit to Citicorp, totaling these authorizations by availability date and comparing the daily totals to what Citicorp posts each day.  Under normal circumstances, these two values should balance, i.e., what you sent Citicorp should be the same as what they received and posted.  If they do not, a potential reconciliation situation exists and is reported as a "variance".  If this occurs, SARS provides you with the tools to identify the specific cases and authorizations that are causing this out of balance condition.  It is then up to you to evaluate each item and if necessary, take corrective action.

Based on the previous paragraph, you can think of reconciliation with SARS as a two-step process.  Step one is to verify that a given day reconciles, i.e., there is no variance for the day.  Step two is used when a variance does exist and you need to know what cases and authorizations are causing it. SARS translates these two steps into two screens:


1. **The Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) screen**: Used to determine if a variance exists.

2. **The Case Reconciliation screen**: Identifies which cases and authorizations are causing a variance.


## STEP 1 - THE ACCOUNT LEVEL RECONCILIATION (LEVEL 1) SCREEN

The quickest way in SARS to determine if a variance exists is to view the SARS Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report.  This report presents information at the highest possible level, Food Stamps and Cash. Based on the day you specify, the Account Level Reconciliation Report calculates what the starting obligation balance is, what the net new obligations are for the day, how much was redeemed for the day and what the ending obligation balance is for the day (starting obligation balance plus net new obligations minus the day's redemptions equals ending obligation).  It then compares these numbers to the Citicorp numbers reported on their Benefit Draw Down report.  If these "calculated" values match up to the Citicorp "reported" values, no variance exists.  If they do not, the difference is reported as a

variance.  This variance is then further broken down as either an issuance variance or a redemption variance.  If the variance cannot be attributed to either an issuance or a redemption, it is classified as an unexplained variance.

Figure 89 illustrates the SARS Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report.



**Figure 89: Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1)**

To perform EBT reconciliation you should analyze each of the variance lines.  Zeros in all these lines means there are no variances and therefore no issues to investigate.  If they are not zero, you may need to go on to step 2 to determine the case and authorization that are causing the variance.  However, there are some situations where the variance is not based on a specific case or authorization.  The first and most common is when your county has not entered the county bank data for the day or entered it incorrectly.  This will be shown as a matching redemption and unexplained variance for the day under Cash.  You can verify this by going to the SARS Redemption Reconciliation (Level 3B) screen and checking on the county clearing statement line at the bottom of the screen.  A zero on this line for the day in question means a missing bank entry.  A value that does not match the calculated total indicates a potential miss keying or an incorrect draw down amount by Citicorp.

You will need to contact the person in your county that is responsible for this entry to have it verified. If they enter or change this value, they will need to run "*Update Outstanding Variances*" for that day. Refer to section 4.1, County Bank Data and section 4.4, Update Outstanding Variances, of the SARS User Manual, for more information on these functions.

The second and less common cause of a variance not attributed to a specific case and authorization is when Citicorp does not forward one of the county issuance files to SARS. Citicorp is responsible for imaging a copy of all communications to and from the county to SARS so that SARS can archive it on behalf of the state and county and, in the case of the issuance files, read and process it. If this communication breaks down between SARS and Citicorp, very large variances will appear in the SARS system. This can be verified very quickly by checking the SARS Reconciliation Messages screen. This screen identifies any missing files. Should you discover this type of situation, you will need to contact the SARS Help Desk so that SARS can contact Citicorp, obtain the missing files and rerun the batch for that day.

Any other non-zero values in the unexplained variance or the redemption variance lines are indications of potentially serious problems. If you encounter a variance like this, you should contact the SARS Help Desk for further assistance. The only variance, and most likely variance, that requires you to go to step two is an Issuance variance.

### STEP 2 - THE CASE RECONCILIATION SCREEN

Once you have determined that an issuance variance exists that is not a result of any missing files, specific case and authorization information can be obtained by viewing the Case Reconciliation screen.

The Case Reconciliation report details the benefits by case and authorization that can cause variances or potential reconciliation issues. This report allows you to view reconciliation data at the most detailed level.

The Case Reconciliation report details benefit authorizations that fall into one of the following nine categories:

10. <u>Benefits in the benefit issuance file but are not unlinked and did not post in the activity file</u>: This error occurs when a benefit is found in the county authorization file that should have posted but did not. The majority of time that you see this error, it is caused by a timing issue, i.e., the EBT system actually posted it but not in time for inclusion on this day's activity file. If this is the case, error number 3 will be issued for the same benefit tomorrow. If this does not occur, this benefit needs to be investigated since for some reason, t is not posting and the client is therefore not getting their benefits. The most common cause of this situation is when the benefit being posted is either Food Stamps or Cash but the case it is being applied to is of the opposite account type, e.g., a cash benefit posting to a Food Stamps only case. There is no client EBT card that may access the new benefit type. The

only way to correct this situation is to correct the client's access type through the eligibility system.

11. <u>Benefits linked up but were not posted in activity file</u>: This error occurs when a benefit in a previous county authorization file was originally not posted due to being unlinked, however, as of this day, it is linked and therefore would normally have been included in the activity file as a posting but was not. The cause and resolution of this error is the same as error 1 above.

12. <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file but were not unlinked yesterday or today:</u> This error occurs when a benefit posts but there is no corresponding issuance on the day it posts, nor was it in the unlinked file on the previous day. For timing issues, as described in error 1 above, this is the corresponding error you will receive on the day following either an error 1 or error 2. If this error ever occurs when there was not a corresponding error 1 or error 2 from the previous day, for this case and authorization, a serious problem has occurred and you should contact the SARS Help Desk.

13. <u>Unlinked benefits were never issued in an issuance file</u>: This error occurs when the EBT system reports a benefit in the unlinked file but SARS has never seen this authorization on any previous benefit issuance file. This error should only occur when the issuance file comes after 3pm but before the unlinked process runs (before 5pm-6pm). During this brief window, benefits will not post in the activity file because the financial books have closed for that day, however, any unlinked benefits will show immediately. SARS will not have processed the issuance file so as to synchronize with the Citicorp financial books and therefore will be unaware of this authorization until the next day.

14. <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file but still unlinked</u>: This error occurs when the EBT system posts a benefit which was previously unlinked but rather than removing it from the unlinked file, it continues to report it as unlinked. To date this have never occurred and if discovered, warrants a call to the SARS Help Desk.

15. <u>Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file and became unlinked today</u>: This error occurs when EBT system posts a benefit but at the same time reports it as unlinked. To date this has never occurred and if discovered, warrants a call to the SARS Help Desk.

16. <u>Benefits that linked up today</u>: This is simply an informational message alerting you of a previously unlinked benefit that has just linked up and properly

posted to the clients account.

17. <u>Benefits with an availability date of today were voided</u>: This is simply an informational message alerting you of a benefit that would have posted today but did not because it was voided before its availability date, i.e. today.

18. <u>Unlinked benefits that aged off the system today</u>: This is an informational message alerting you of a benefit that was unlinked but because it has been unlinked for over 90 days, it has been automatically deleted from the EBT system.

Of these errors and informational messages, messages 1 through 3 are common conditions that require you to track and verify.  They are the most common reasons for a variance and are typically the result of a timing issue.  Each day that message 1 and 2 appear, you should see a corresponding positive variance on that day for the sum of their benefit amounts.  On the next day, you should see this variance cancel out with the corresponding message 3 for the same benefits. Message 3 will be a negative variance that will offset the positive variances from the previous day. It is when you do not see this corresponding error number 3 that you need to investigate further as to why these benefits did not post.

Error number 4 will appear anytime a benefit is found in the unlinked benefits file but has never appeared in any issuance file.  Unlike errors 1 and 2, which only show once when they first occur, error number 4 will show up every day that the benefit appears in the unlinked file with no corresponding issuance entry.  This error should only appear once for any given authorization. If it carries to a second day, this indicates a serious error condition because it is not reflective of a timing issue. When this error appears, SARS will reflect a negative variance for its amount because the unlinked benefit pool will be greater than the expected amount, lowering SARS' net obligations added for that day.

Any other errors, i.e., errors 5 and 6 or error 3 without the preceding error 1 or error 2, are an indication of a serious problem and you should call the SARS Help Desk for assistance.  The information messages, i.e., messages 7, 8 and 9, are for your information only and may be useful for reconciliation to your eligibility system.  They do not require any action on your part.  Error messages 1 through 6 are all highlighted in red whereas Informational messages 7 through 9 are highlighted in green.  Figure 90 on the next page provides an illustration of the Case Reconciliation screen for Figure 89's first day of variance, January 15, 2003.

**Figure 90: Case Reconciliation**

Figure 90 shows the cause for the $98 variance in Food Stamps and the $466 variance for Cash.  Both are the result of Error Message 1.  If this is a timing issue, January 16th should show a corresponding message 3 for these same case and authorizations.  Figure 91 on the next page illustrates the January 16th Case Reconciliation screen.

**Figure 91: Case Reconciliation**

As shown in Figure 91, both the Food Stamps and cash authorizations for January 15th that were causing the variance are offset on January 16th with the corresponding message 3. However, variances still exist for January 16th. This is the result of new message 1 and message 2 errors occurring on this day. If these are timing issues, once again they will be offset on the subsequent day. It is when they are not offset that further investigation is required.

### Summary

The primary reconciliation task using SARS can be accomplished using a two step process.  The first step is to use the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) screen to determine if a variance exists and the second step is to use the Case Reconciliation screen to identify the authorizations (cases) that are causing the variance.  To do this, perform the following:

a. Logon to SARS

b. Select the Reconciliation Report Menu

c. Select the Account Level Reconciliation (Level 1) Report

d. Set the date such that the last of the seven days to be displayed is yesterday's date, e.g., if today is March 11, set the date to March 4 (03/04/2003) so that March 4 through March 10 is displayed.  March 10 is the day that is being reconciled.

e. Click the **GO** button.

f. Check for an issuance variance under Food Stamps and Cash.  If none exist, you are done for the day.  If either has a variance, go to step "g".

g. From the Sub-Menu drop down list, select the Case Reconciliation screen.

h. Change the date to the date being reconciled, i.e., yesterday.

i. Click the **GO** button.

j. The issuance variance should be related to either the message "Benefits in the benefit issuance file but are not unlinked and did not post in the activity file" or the "Benefits linked up but were not posted in activity file".  If this is not true, contact the Help Desk.  If it is true, make sure the authorization was posted by the EBT System (check the administrative terminal) or wait until tomorrow to check if the opposite message shows up on this screen, i.e., message "Benefits unexpectedly posted in the activity file but were not unlinked yesterday or today".  If they were not posted, you need to determine why.